

**P**art 2:

**F**ield **R**esearch

# Field Research

The Research Team met with stakeholders in order to learn first-hand about the challenges of welfare-to-work transportation and to profile exemplary programs. Focus groups were held with transportation stakeholders in Michigan, California, and South Carolina; findings are summarized in Chapter 5. Chapters 6-16 summarize case studies describing exemplary programs that provide transportation services to welfare recipients and, in some cases, other low-income workers. The profiled programs used a variety of creative strategies to address customer needs. They include the following:

- **AC Transit Neighborhood Circulator**, which provides night-time connections between rail stations and a residential community in North Richmond, California.
- **AdVANtage Van Service**, in Anne Arundel County, Maryland, which trains welfare recipients to operate van services.
- **AdVANtage II**, at Sojourner-Douglas College in Baltimore, Maryland, which helps students at this community-based college to provide transportation services as van operators.
- **Contra Costa County Social Services Department**, in Martinez, California, which is making vans available to TANF participants to provide transportation services for community organizations and child care facilities.
- **Good News Garage**, in Burlington, Vermont, a faith-based program that refurbishes donated automobiles and turns them over to low-income residents.
- **Lower San Antonio Transportation Support Project**, in Oakland, California, provides trip planning and support services to give community-based organizations in this multicultural neighborhood.
- **Metropolitan Transportation Commission**, in the San Francisco Bay Area, California, which is facilitating a county-based planning process and developing transportation resource guides.

- **Pinellas County Metropolitan Planning Organization**, in Clearwater, Florida, which administers a menu of transportation options for TANF recipients.
- **San Diego Workforce Partnership**, in San Diego, California, which coordinates resources from church groups and nonprofit organizations to provide work-related transportation.
- **Santee-Wateree Regional Transportation Authority**, in Sumter, South Carolina, which coordinated new flexible work-related transportation services with existing services for clients of human service agencies.
- **State of New Jersey**, which developed a comprehensive county-based transportation planning process
- **State of South Carolina**, which developed an interagency planning program to support local efforts.
- **Transit Authority of River City**, in Louisville, Kentucky, whose services include a one-stop center and a late-night subscription shuttle to support second- and third-shift workers.
- **TransPac** in Pleasant Hill, California, a regional planning agency that provides transportation incentives and traveler information.

These programs were selected because they approached the transportation needs of their clients in innovative ways.

A list of individuals contacted for the case studies appears in Appendix D.

# Focus Group Findings

A series of focus groups was convened to identify and discuss issues associated with access to jobs and potential solutions. The focus group technique is a research method borrowed from the market research and product testing fields. It is a qualitative method for eliciting people's perspectives, opinions, feelings, and thoughts about a topic. In research applications such as this, the method has been modified to fit with discussions of public policy and practice issues. Some noteworthy modifications were made. In particular, participants are chosen because of their involvement in some aspect of the topic, rather than being "ordinary" citizens. The elaborate one-way mirrors and other physical aspects of product testing are omitted. Incentive payments are used sparingly, if at all (in this case, only for consumer participants, for whom an incentive might defray the out-of-pocket costs of participating).

Focus groups were convened with transportation stakeholders in three locations to assess the issues and challenges associated with welfare-related transportation:

- Detroit, Michigan
- Oakland, California
- Columbia, South Carolina

The research team set up and facilitated each focus group; local agencies provided assistance in recruiting participants. (Local agency information and focus group schedules are presented in the appendix.) Overall, the focus groups drew participants from social service agencies, transit providers, employers, private nonprofit organizations, and welfare clients. While each group included a mix of individuals, not every focus group included representation from every category. Because the focus group participants were assured of confidentiality, more detailed information about the group composition is not presented in this report.

The focus groups elicited information about employment transportation needs and exemplary planning, service operation, and financing strategies.

They were designed to help the research team identify potential case study sites and develop a useful evaluation methodology. Hearing directly from practitioners about their day-to-day concerns will help ensure that the research results from this project remain relevant. Discussion topics included the following:

- What is the role of transportation in supporting welfare reform?
- What kind of information and resources would be helpful in meeting the transportation needs of your agency?
- What are the barriers to providing employment-related transportation?
- How would you evaluate the success of your transportation program? How would you compare it to others?

The focus group findings are summarized in the following sections.

## Overall Themes

The major themes of the three focus groups complement and support the findings from the literature review and are summarized below.

**Focus group participants felt clearly that the transportation aspects of welfare to work were bigger than just the transportation link.** They saw the need to create strong, effective coordination between transportation and social service providers – real working partnerships around consumer needs and shared provider goals and agendas if they are to successfully solve the complex problem of welfare to work. But they stressed that the problem must be seen in an even larger context.

This context has to do with land use and development patterns and extent and location of affordable housing – conditions and dynamics that make a challenging problem even more difficult to solve. It also has to do with the nature of poverty in this country and how it affects poor people seeking jobs, the challenges and needs they face, and the requirements and demands this creates for social service and transportation providers seeking to find solutions. Unless planners see the problem in this holistic way, they will miss essential links and context and will be less effective in finding solutions for the transportation component.

**Discussion of the transportation aspects of welfare to work centered almost entirely on public transit.** They stressed that this is essentially a *public* issue and specifically a *public transit* issue. Transit is the only realistic option for most consumers in most locations. Other modes of transportation are not viable alternatives for most people, either because

they are not available (van services, free employer shuttles), because of distances between work and home (say, for bicycle or pedestrian trips), or because they cost too much (taxis and autos).

**Participants felt that consumers' needs varied by where they lived and worked** – and the distances between home and jobs, the urban or rural character of the area, the availability of transportation services and options. The experiences and skills of welfare clients, both in the realm of seeking and keeping a job and in using transit, were also key ingredients in the mix. They commented that the farther social agencies go in reducing welfare rolls and getting consumers into the work force, the more difficult the problems are in meeting the needs of those remaining clients still in need of work. These individuals often have an array of problems and needs that reach well beyond access to jobs.

**Participants repeatedly addressed an array of gaps between the needs of consumers involved in welfare-to-work programs and available public transit services.** Typical transit is not well suited to meet many needs, even when services are reasonably extensive. Routes are often oriented to core areas; they often do not serve outlying areas such as industrial complexes, where there might be jobs for consumers, and rural areas are sparsely served. Transit schedules do not fit well with the job hours of many individuals making the transition from welfare to work – weekends, early hours for service workers in hotels and restaurants, as well as late-night shifts.

Consumers often have long trips to work, some that cross transit jurisdictions where the fit of schedules, routes, and fares is an issue. Chained transit trips – including stops for child care and school, work, and shopping – are particularly complicated for mothers with young children. Safety, accessibility, and affordability are persistent issues.

**Both social service and transportation providers stressed that they need to learn to speak each other's language, understand each other's needs, and develop shared goals and agendas.** They are not accustomed to working together, and they are driven by different program mandates and needs. They feel that they are tackling the same problems, but from different angles. Their approaches are most often not well known to one another or well coordinated, much less jointly developed to yield mutual support and shared efficiencies and effectiveness. There are some instances in which they have developed good working relationships, and rare cases where they see themselves and act as true partners.

Transit trips can be especially complicated for mothers traveling with young children.

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Stakeholders defined success in much the same way – convenient, efficient, reliable, affordable, accessible, and safe transportation to work.  
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**Participants felt that the major stakeholders – consumers, social service and transportation providers, and employers – shared common goals and had much the same definition of success:** to have convenient, efficient, reliable, affordable, accessible and safe transit to work.

Participants thought that some stakeholders had different perspectives on costs and the challenges and difficulties of linking consumers with their jobs. Employers vary in the depth of their understanding of the issues and their degree of flexibility. Their capacity to be important contributors to solutions depends on their willingness to be flexible partners, the pool of jobs they have to offer, and the state of the economy which shapes their ease or difficulty in getting and keeping employees.

**Almost all of the participants expressed the feeling that politicians mandating welfare-to-work programs were not realistic about what it would take to accomplish a successful program.** They expressed frustration and stress at the pressures of trying to solve the problem, help meet consumers’ needs, and achieve mandated results. Many felt they were just getting to know their counterparts on the social service or transportation sides, and they expressed the desire to work together.

## Perspective of the Participants

The following summary presents the major points made by participants in all six focus groups. One central goal is to highlight the strong, shared agreements and emphatic opinions that emerged from the overall discussion. In addition, significant differences of opinion are highlighted. This summary distills the shared perspectives of participants and is intended to capture the essence of the comments, rather than to present a detailed record of all points raised.

## Stakeholders and Their Needs

As might be expected, focus group participants identified social service providers, transportation providers, and consumers as the major stakeholders. Employers were also cited as important stakeholders. Others mentioned included elected officials; governmental agencies (in addition to transportation and social services) who fund, program and regulate public policies and services; education and training organizations; economic development organizations; churches and other community-based groups; and labor and industry.

## Issues and Obstacles To Overcome

The discussion of issues and obstacles to be overcome consumed the greatest amount of time and engaged participants’ energy and interest the

most. This clearly was a broad topic of real concern to everyone present, and participants had a lot to say about all aspects of the subject.

Participants felt strongly that a broad view of this subject is vital. They stressed that the essence of the problem will be missed if it is defined simply and narrowly, focusing just on the transportation link between workers and their jobs. The topic must embrace a wide array of stakeholders, a large set of core and ancillary problems and issues, and integrated strategies in order to lead to successful solutions. The subject and the solutions are cross-disciplinary by definition.

Participants said that the problems associated with consumers' access to jobs are linked with other key issues of urban form, public policy, and public services. Many of these are familiar topics to transportation planners and social service providers alike, though they are not always addressed together when considering issues like welfare to work. Participants saw critical links with land use and development patterns, including the affordability of housing and its distribution in urban areas and the ill fit between sprawling urban areas and transit service patterns. They commented regularly on the imbalance between funding for highways and transit, common perceptions that transit is for the poor, and lack of concern by the wealthier about transportation needs other than their own. Some also noted perceived inequities in funding between large regional transit systems and smaller operators within the region.

**Focus group participants placed welfare-related transportation in the larger context of poverty in American society.**

Links between poverty and a host of other factors were the subject of considerable discussion; these included race, single-mother families, generational poverty, age, multiple physical and social problems, lack of education, lack of work and life skills, and inadequate cultural and experiential supports. Multiple challenges of rural poverty were noted, including its broad distribution and its links with families living in an area for a long time but no longer able to support themselves off the land. Participants noted the added difficulties in serving people who are often widely scattered in sparsely populated areas, far from job concentrations, transit services, and social service locations.

These interlocking networks of problems were seen to create great demands on all the key players trying to link people with jobs. This also creates difficulties in integrating and coordinating transportation and social services. They make the job of transportation providers more challenging because customers often have different mobility patterns than core



oriented, nine-to-five work trips. Also, customers may be unaccustomed to using public transit, particularly if trips have many links that cross transit jurisdictions. Multiple jurisdictions within a region also complicate the task of coordination, both among transportation providers and between transportation and social service agencies.

These problems also complicate the job of social service providers. Participants noted that they were called upon to develop and use new sets of information, to interact with new partners, and to help their clients make what could be a tremendously challenging transition into the workplace. They also cited issues associated with making all the “pieces of the puzzle” fit together: training, social service coordination, job seeking, employer recruiting, coordinating transportation to work (and, for many clients child-care trips), transitioning from financial support for transportation to having clients assume responsibility for their transportation costs, and so forth.

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**Transportation services should provide seamless connections, especially for the complex trips that are typical for many welfare clients.**  
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Quite unanimously, participants felt that public transit services were the foundation and the practical service choice for the vast majority of welfare-to-work clients. Typical transit services may serve their traditional riders well, but gaps can be significant for welfare-to-work passengers. Schedules and routes of existing services often need to be modified to fit the origins, destinations, and work schedules for workers and the entry-level jobs they are likely to secure – at least initially. In addition to basic accessibility, TANF clients need services that are reliable and safe. Participants also felt that transportation providers need to make their services more interconnected and “seamless,” particularly for the long, multi-leg transit trips that are typical for many welfare clients.

Flexibility (the ability to vary a set trip pattern, if necessary) was also considered important, though perhaps not possible for many consumers. Such flexibility could result from more frequent service, service options, and back-up provisions (such as emergency rides home for consumers, or back-up vehicles for small-scale operators in case of breakdowns).

Finally, focus group participants flagged transit affordability as an issue, both with regard to overall fare levels and the cash outlay generally required for prepaid passes. They also noted that costs can jump if working mothers have small children to drop off and pick up at school or day care. Some participants also believed that longer-term support for transit costs was needed, particularly given the high percentage of their income that some recipients paid for transportation. Finally, participants commented favorably on an example cited in one focus group, where the job program

purchases tokens so that welfare consumers do not have the stigma of paying fare differently (via vouchers or chits) than other riders.

There was little discussion of options other than transit, such as taxi or subscription services or autos. A few participants commented strongly that auto options are not realistic. If consumers have a car, it is often not available to them for work trips or vehicles tend to be run down and unreliable.

When the idea of autos for welfare clients was raised, participants scoffed at the idea that this was a viable or practical approach to implement in any significant way. They doubted that it would make a real dent in solving the need for access to jobs, or that it would prove financially sound and effective for consumers over time. One social service provider commented wryly that, after getting a donated car, she would then need to get donated repair services, and would have to figure out ways to deal with insurance. When the car died, she continued, she would have to figure out a way to get it towed away.

**Participants stressed the importance of communication and collaboration.**

Participants said clearly that transportation providers and social service providers share the need to understand each other. They noted that even in the focus group discussions, people often did not understand one another's vocabulary, programs and mandates, and constraints on what they can or cannot do. Furthermore, people commented on the lack of communication channels between stakeholders like themselves that are unused to working with each other, and many social service providers said they lacked sufficient, clear information about FTA programs that could assist them.

In addition to the communication aspects of coordination, participants stressed the need for collaborative partnerships, where flexibility is an essential dynamic among all parties. One participant described it as the fingers of a hand needing to all be coordinated and flexible – transportation providers, employers, social service agencies, and clients. Everyone needs to be willing to help accommodate the needs of all partners. In one example, a job placement and transportation team had worked effectively to identify a concentration of job opportunities with a particular employer. However, the employer was unwilling or unable to adjust work hours to start and end fifteen minutes later, even though the transit provider would adjust schedules at the end of the day to make this work. In the end, the whole deal fell through.

Team approaches were cited as working well, though in general people indicated that transportation and social service agencies were still going

their own way a much of the time, rather than working in coordination with each other – much less jointly. Disconnects were also noted between levels of government within a given area – between states and regions, for example, having to do with different interpretations of mandates or roles, different priorities, conflicting schedules, and poor communication.

In the discussions, there was a sense that implementing welfare to work was a fast, huge, new, different, complicated, high pressure, high stress proposition. There was also the sense that people were working so hard, in the thick of the problems, that they did not have the “luxury” to step back and engage in coordinated, team planning and implementation.

Social service staffers believed that transportation providers needed to understand that their typical services would not work to meet the needs of many welfare-to-work consumers, no matter how good the services may be. They also believed that everyone involved needed to appreciate consumers’

life circumstances, and the demands and stresses they face every day. They needed to understand the degree to which welfare consumers were prepared to undertake work and the logistics of the work trip. They also said that most consumers have very little, if any, margin for error (i.e., if a work trip is missed, if transportation delays cause day care pick-up problems, if there is no extra money to take a cab, or move to a location better served by transit, and so forth). As welfare agencies meet their mandates to move clients into the work force, the people

remaining on welfare become harder to serve. These individuals facing multiple issues are the hardest challenges – those with substance abuse problems, mental health issues, family responsibilities, physical disabilities, and the like.

A number of participants also commented on the costs and inefficiencies facing social services agencies that attempt to institute their own transportation services, through running vans or having social workers drive consumers to their jobs. The participants sensed that many of these attempts, while well intentioned, involved social service providers doing things beyond their areas of expertise. Several transit providers commented that social service agencies often set up these types of van services without asking local transportation providers if they might be able to offer a service to meet consumers’ needs. They added that van services like this frequently fail when sponsors encounter problems and that these issues often could be avoided altogether if local transit operators were in the loop. They further thought that such services operated at higher costs or lower efficiency than those offered by transportation providers; and such approaches often make

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**Most welfare recipients had very little margin for error when making transportation arrangements.**  
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use of staff and vehicles in ways that are not a cost-effective use of these social service agencies' resources.

Both social service and transportation providers commented on issues of turf getting in the way of meeting client needs. Some turf battles involved jurisdictions of neighboring transit providers, where one provider cannot or will not pick up riders, even if it makes the most sense from a service and rider standpoint to do so.

Other turf issues involve regulatory agencies that do not want to give up control of service approvals, even though this hampers the providers' ability to be timely and responsive to user needs, particularly for new users. Service modifications lag well behind the schedules and needs of consumers, employers and social service agencies attempting to get people into the work force and meet welfare-to-work mandates. Another turf issue was implied in discussions, as noted above, of social service agencies running their own vans or similar transportation services. While this was not stated explicitly as a turf issue, it can be directly interpreted as such.

**Some successful programs chose to build on existing services rather than create entirely new ones.**

## **Suggestions for Success**

Participants cited the features of successful programs and the cooperative relationships necessary to produce them. These include building on existing services, rather than creating wholly new ones. In addition, effective transit services will often need to be modified to address the needs of welfare-to-work consumers. This includes modifying schedules and routes to better fit consumers' needs and the hours and locations of jobs.

Creating working partnerships between social service and transportation providers and employers is also key. Transportation and social service providers need to understand each other's language, programs, goals, needs, and constraints. Also key is allowing each service provider to do what it does best, rather than having social service organizations also try to be transportation operators, for example. These partnerships extend to employers as well. Employers need to regard themselves as teammates. All key stakeholders need to show some flexibility in order to arrive at solutions that meet all their requirements, constraints, and needs.

Focus group participants cited a few specific examples of highly successful programs. One in particular is the close collaboration and joint action efforts of the South Carolina Department of Social Services' Marion County Office of Job Development and Pee Dee Regional Transportation Authority in Florence. This partnership has successfully targeted employment

concentrations in the Myrtle Beach area and developed integrated employment and transportation strategies for consumers from adjacent rural areas in Marion County.

Some of the key features of this example are a very close working partnership between the two key players in the social service and transit agencies respectively. They approach employers together when seeking jobs for consumers. They work together to identify necessary transit schedule modifications, and together they lobby potential employers to seek modest changes in work schedules so that all of the pieces of the program fit together. The transit property provides vehicles to take consumers on job application trips to a group of potential employers. Job program ads appear on the sides of buses. They help organize and sponsor job fairs to promote workers to jobs and jobs to workers. As he sums up the underlying dynamic of their partnership, the transportation manager quips “my job is to keep Paula (his social services counterpart) happy.” The nature and extent of this coordinated effort struck other focus group participants as a real-world application of the more general points and principles made throughout the discussions.

# Case Study:

## AdVANtage Van Service

Anne Arundel County is located in central Maryland, approximately 27 miles from both Washington, D.C., and Baltimore. In July 1996 the Anne Arundel County Department of Social Services (DSS) collaborated with the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) of Annapolis and Anne Arundel County and the YWCA of the Greater Baltimore Area to develop and implement a transportation micro-enterprise program to address the region's unmet transportation needs. The program was designed to train and subsidize public assistance recipients to become entrepreneurs; they in turn would offer transportation services to other DSS recipients for job searches, commuting to approved job training programs, and work trips.

The specific program goals were to:

- Train and capitalize twelve cash assistance applicants or recipients as van company owners in Anne Arundel County
- Contract with the new entrepreneurs to provide transportation services to other public assistance recipients
- Develop a "how to" guide to help other jurisdictions replicate the welfare-to-work entrepreneurial model
- Expand the entrepreneurs' client base to include other low-income residents, private employers and the general public

The resulting program was funded in 1997-1998 by the Federal Transit Administration and sponsored by the Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA).

## Transportation Barriers to Employment

Annapolis Transit, the local transit operator, provides general purpose fixed-route service and route-deviation paratransit service, and coordinates with the Maryland Mass Transit Administration (MTA) and other private service providers for limited service to urban areas of the county. Taxicab operators fill gaps in the overall transportation service. Although nearly

every community in the county has some type of transportation service, existing service is either limited or available only to agency clients. A 1994 study conducted by the Maryland Department of Human Resources indicated that approximately 40 percent of Anne Arundel County residents stated that transportation was the major barrier to employment.

Two major hospitals, a university, a college, a naval academy, Baltimore-Washington International (BWI) Airport, Westinghouse and Fort Mead military base are located in Anne Arundel County. These employers offer a variety of entry-level jobs with multiple shifts, including late night shifts. However, the job sites are located five miles or more from residential neighborhoods and are in industrial areas along long stretches of highway.

## **Planning Process**

DSS designed the AdVANtage program to address the local transportation barriers. The YWCA of Annapolis and Anne Arundel County and the YWCA of the Greater Baltimore Area contracted with DSS to develop the training curriculum. The YWCAs were responsible for designing a business training curriculum for transportation providers; conducting the training; providing social supports throughout the training period, including group therapy and individual counseling; and follow-up with the entrepreneurs during and after the project period. The CTAA provided technical assistance, relevant transportation information and contacts, and assisted the YWCAs in developing the transportation provider curriculum.

DSS Job Counselors helped market AdVANtage by advising recipients of its availability during initial Job Search enrollment and during appointments to re-determine the recipient's continuing eligibility for public assistance. Caseworkers told public assistance recipients about the AdVANtage program when they requested transportation for employment purposes. The program was also advertised through community presentations, brochures, Web sites, media and major newspaper coverage and word-of-mouth.

## **The AdVANtage Model**

The AdVANtage project is a vehicle ownership program that trained and capitalized four DSS clients as entrepreneurs. The entrepreneurs contracted with DSS to provide welfare-to-work employment transportation:

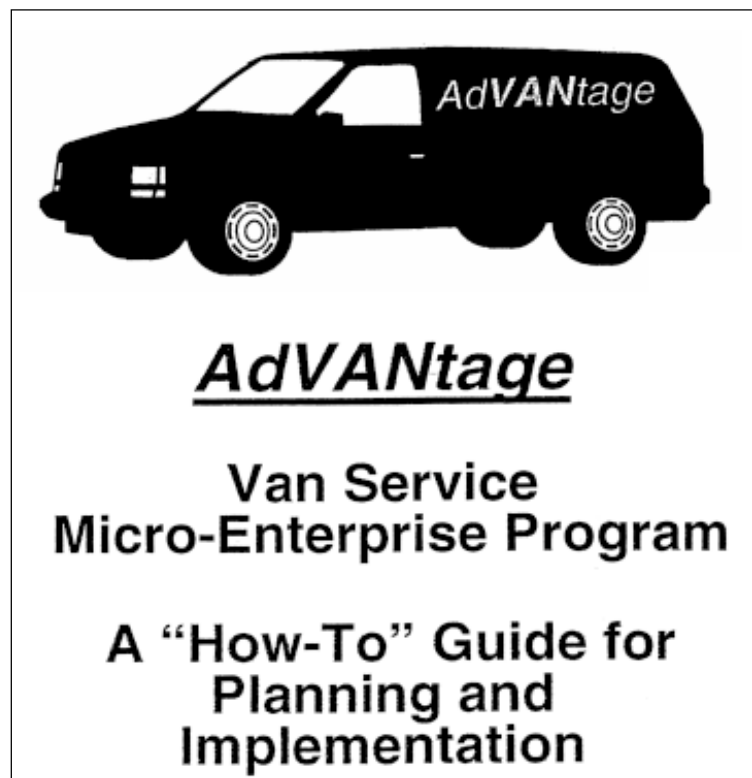
- To provide feeder service to public transportation, taking DSS clients to bus stops or park-and-ride lots
- To provide an alternative means of travel for DSS clients who need transportation for work, job training, or job search activities

After two mailings to nearly 2,000 welfare recipients and four months of marketing to hundreds of welfare applicants during their intake employability assessments, 80 interest forms were obtained. Of these, only seven were considered suitable candidates for the AdVANtage project. The selected participants were screened based on credit history, criminal background, health, and general interest in starting their own business. Six of the seven recipients were selected for enrollment in the AdVANtage program.

Following the selection process, the participants began a four-month training and development program. The training curriculum included computer training, business development, professional development, financial planning and management, communication, safe driving, and marketing. Six members from the Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE) served as mentors and advisors to the participants. Local businessmen served as speakers on a variety of topics throughout the project. Support and guidance was also available from the Annapolis Regional Transportation Management Association and the Public Service Commission. Other community support and recognition came from the County Executive, who honored the participants at a business reception attended by over 200 community members.

Although six participants entered the training and development program, only four were ultimately capitalized as entrepreneurs. Two of the participants were dismissed from the process for undisclosed reasons. While DSS anticipated that one employee-owned corporation would be formed, each of the participants started his or her own transportation business. This presented a significant challenge for the project team, since each business plan required a different approach. Nonetheless, the project team helped the entrepreneurs with various aspects of setting up and operating a business, including obtaining bank loans, purchasing, leasing and repairing vehicles, purchasing insurance, and bidding on contracts.

In December 1997, the first entrepreneur began transporting DSS clients, and





the other three began operating in early 1998. The entrepreneurs operate as sole proprietors assigned to a core regional county area, but not limited to a specific jurisdiction. One of the original four entrepreneurs stopped operations immediately after start-up, but a new entrepreneur began another operation in early 1999.

## The AdVANtage Service

The entrepreneurs own and operate 15-passenger vans. DSS does not maintain records on the number of clients using the AdVANtage service, but estimates that 500-700 monthly trips are provided during the weekday peak hours. A total of \$2,000 is paid to the four entrepreneurs monthly.

County staff described the AdVANtage program as a “rest stop to the top.”

AdVANtage farecards are issued to recipients who have no other means of transportation. DSS encourages job counselors to consider other alternatives first because of the cost of this service. Eligible clients are issued an “intelligent” farecard, which pays for 40 one-way trips; each AdVANtage vehicle is equipped with a farecard reader. The client is responsible for reserving AdVANtage service 24 hours in advance. AdVANtage entrepreneurs are paid \$10 per trip up to 10 miles, \$13 per trip for 11-20 miles, and \$18 per trip for more than 21 miles. They receive an additional \$3 for each child riding with a parent. DSS does not provide ongoing financial or mentoring support to the entrepreneurs, but micro-grants of approximately \$3,500 will be available for service improvements and expansion.

## Program Evaluation

DSS stated that the AdVANtage program has increased access to transit from the home to job sites, and “has eliminated the client’s excuse that lack of transportation makes them unable to work.” DSS could not indicate the number of clients who have obtained or retained jobs because of the AdVANtage program but reported a 75 percent decrease in its caseload due to welfare reform initiatives.

DSS considers the program a success and describes it as “a rest stop to the top.” The project has successfully:

- Trained and capitalized four cash assistance recipients as van company owners in Anne Arundel County
- Contracted with the new entrepreneurs to provide transportation services to other public assistance recipients
- Developed a “how-to” guide to help other jurisdictions to replicate the

AdVANtage program, which is available free of charge from the Anne Arundel County Department of Social Services

- Developed a replicable business training program combined with a transportation component<sup>1</sup>
- Expanded the entrepreneurs' client base to include contracts to provide transportation service for private schools, United Cerebral Palsy, Department of Occupational Rehabilitation Services, Fresh Air Accessible Services (non-emergency), and Baltimore Washington International Airport

CTAA has commissioned a formal evaluation of the program, which is currently underway.

## The Entrepreneur's Perspective

Entrepreneurs had a different perspective of the challenges and success of the AdVANtage program, summarized here. The entrepreneurs operate their business out of their homes as sole proprietors. Each is responsible for scheduling, dispatching, driving the vehicles, insurance costs, vehicle maintenance, repairs, soliciting contracts, writing proposals, and all other aspects of the business.

Contact was possible with only three of the entrepreneurs, who described the fourth entrepreneur as "having a hard time," "given up," "not doing well," and "has not operated for more than three months."

- **Vendor A** owns two vans, one 7-passenger and one 15-passenger vehicle. Service is operated during the morning and evening peak hours, Monday through Friday. The vendor reported transporting 549 DSS clients in the first month of service, 394 clients in the second month, and 353 in the third month. DSS referrals have dwindled to 30 trips per month. The entrepreneur attributes this decline to the fact that DSS gives its clients only one farecard. After the first month, the DSS client must find another way to travel.

The entrepreneur reported transporting an average of eight passengers per day. In July 1999, the entrepreneur was awarded a contract with a YWCA for 30 trips per month at a rate of \$2.50 per mile. In addition, to the management and operational responsibilities of the business, the entrepreneur also has to find new contracting opportunities.

The entrepreneur reported that no ongoing support from any source is

available. The mentor assigned from SCORE is “too busy to help” with problems encountered.

- **Vendor B** described the assigned core area as “remote and isolated.” She uses one 15-passenger van, fraught with mechanical problems, to provide service. Initially the entrepreneur scheduled and drove the vehicle, 10-12 hours Monday through Friday, but now receives occasional assistance from a relative. During the first year of operation, the entrepreneur earned \$40,000, but only netted \$15,000 to cover the living expenses for a family of four, including three young children.

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One entrepreneur is struggling to stay in business despite high operating costs because the community needs transportation services.  
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The entrepreneur emotionally reported struggling to stay in business because of expensive overhead, high cost of insurance, vehicle maintenance and repair costs. Vendor B is not eligible for child support payments and, due to her precarious financial situation, it is highly likely that she will apply for food stamps.

The entrepreneur wants to stay in business because of the community’s need for some source of transportation. She receives support from a staff member at the YWCA.

- **Vendor C** operates one 15-passenger vehicle and is in the process of obtaining a second vehicle. The entrepreneur reports earning a small profit which covers personal expenses. In February 1999, the entrepreneur earned over \$11,000, but netted \$2,000 due to vehicle repairs.

Vendor C averages 177 DSS trips per month and is paid an average of \$1,860- \$2,000 monthly. The entrepreneur is licensed to provide pre-scheduled pick-ups at BWI Airport. (A BWI employee distributes the entrepreneur’s business card to airport customers.) Airport customers are charged \$1.50 per mile for service. Vendor C averages 350 trips per month.

The entrepreneur currently receives no cash support from DSS, but does receive Medicaid for the children and half of the original amount of food stamps. The entrepreneur reports receiving ongoing support and guidance from the YWCA trainer and mentor.

All entrepreneurs reported that the greatest challenge was the fact that the “cards are stacked against them” from the start due to bad credit, lack of transportation knowledge, lack of business expertise, low self-esteem, lack

of confidence, and the very real challenge of having to transition from welfare to work.

The challenge of a four-month training and development program proved to be overwhelming for the entrepreneurs, causing one of the original entrepreneurs to fold within one month of start-up. They reported that it was impossible to learn all that they needed to know to operate a business in a four-month period. Once the “glamour” of the project dissipated, so did ongoing support for the businesses.

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**Entrepreneurs faced challenges in starting their own businesses because of bad credit, lack of business experience, lack of transportation knowledge, and low self-esteem.**

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## **Lessons Learned**

### **Social services departments need to be aware of the real life issues of public assistance recipients.**

The issues should be resolved prior to enrolling them in a program such as AdVANtage.

**Participant recruitment was difficult**, because caseworkers were not trained to recognize the characteristics of successful entrepreneurs. Caseworkers also had difficulty locating participants who met the project’s criteria of “good” credit and “forgivable” criminal charges. As a result, DSS strongly advises that participants be screened closely to ensure that they do not have suspended driver’s licenses or poor driving records, are physically able to operate 12-15 passenger vans and do not have serious criminal histories or bad credit ratings.

**Recipients faced multiple problems as they transitioned from welfare to owning and operating a business.** The following **barriers to self-sufficiency** of entrepreneurs in vehicle ownership programs were identified.

- Inadequate screening of prospective participants, including educational and skills level, and personal circumstances prior to enrollment in the education and training program
- Lack of sustained transportation support for the recipients using the service
- Lack of ongoing support for the entrepreneurs in the form of funding, counseling, education and training, moral support
- Entrepreneurs’ inability to market service to others; i.e., to employers, community organizations, public transportation providers

- Lack of support from public transportation providers
- Limited distribution of farecards to potential DSS clients

Finally, **all of the entrepreneurs reported a need for ongoing emotional and professional support** from social services, local businesses, transportation associations, and local public transportation providers. Neither Annapolis Transit nor the Maryland Mass Transit Administration (MTA) offers any coordination with the AdVANTage service.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Copies are available from the YWCA of Annapolis and Anne Arundel County, 1517 Ritchie Highway, Arnold, MD 21012, at a cost of \$100 per copy.

# Case Study:

## AdVANtage II: Sojourner-Douglass College

Recognizing that many job opportunities are located in the outlying suburban areas, the Baltimore City Department of Social Services (BCDSS) formed partnerships with several agencies and community-based organizations to help bridge the gap between available jobs and eligible employees. BCDSS worked with Sojourner-Douglass College (SDC) and the Maryland Mass Transit Administration (MTA) to initiate a van service and entrepreneurial micro-enterprise program. The goal was to train public assistance recipients as entrepreneurs who, in turn, provided transportation services to other recipients as they searched for employment, attended job training and commuted to and from work. Sojourner-Douglass College is the State of Maryland's only predominately African-American, urban, baccalaureate institution and specializes in educating the "non-traditional student." The average age of the student body is thirty-eight. Most students work or volunteer full-time, in addition to raising families.

In collaboration with BCDSS, SDC launched the AdVANtage II program. This initiative was closely modeled after the AdVANtage Van Service project in Anne Arundel County, Maryland, which successfully produced four entrepreneurs in its first year. The Community Association of America (CTAA) provided technical assistance, relevant transportation information and contacts.

The AdVANtage II program was developed to meet the following objectives:

- Train and capitalize BCDSS benefit recipients as self-employed transportation service providers
- Contract with AdVANtage II providers to provide affordable transportation services for other BCDSS participants
- Expand the customer base of AdVANtage II providers to include other low-income residents, private employers and the public

- Develop a comprehensive manual for other jurisdictions to implement an AdVANtage II program

## Service Area

Inner city Baltimore is home to over half of Maryland's welfare caseload, with the state's highest unemployment rate of 6.7 percent. Sojourner-Douglass College is located in East Baltimore, which has one of the city's highest rates of unemployment, crime, and drug abuse. East Baltimore is one of the impoverished areas that make up the Empowerment Zone; a federally funded community-driven planning process designed to rebuild and revitalize the city's most neglected neighborhoods. Once a city whose primary employers were factories, Baltimore has lost over 63,000 manufacturing jobs from 1970 to 1990. The metropolitan area has added hundreds of thousands of jobs, the majority of them in the service industry. Many of these low-paying jobs are in the suburban communities, making it difficult for city residents to gain access.

The Mass Transit Administration (MTA) is the public transportation operator in the Baltimore area. Although the MTA was willing to contribute to the welfare to work initiative, the agency was not able to meet the needs of transitioning welfare recipients who obtained employment beyond established routes. The MTA is required to cover 50 percent of its operating expenses through fares, and suburban routes are too expensive to operate.

## Planning Process

AdVANtage II began its first phase in 1997, with the difficult task of participant recruitment. Caseworkers from the Baltimore City Department of Social Services were responsible for referring clients to the program during initial job search enrollment and eligibility screenings. However, most caseworkers were unfamiliar with the new program, as well as criteria necessary to identify future entrepreneurs. As a result, caseworkers gave priority referrals to job development/placement programs with which they were familiar. AdVANtage II received no applicants for the first two months of operation.

In response, AdVANtage II staff developed an aggressive marketing campaign targeting caseworkers and potential candidates. AdVANtage II staff conducted workshops, developed a procedural manual and promotional materials, and visited case managers to familiarize them with the project. They also marketed the program heavily to TANF recipients, often hand delivering flyers and promotional materials.

## The AdVANtage II Model

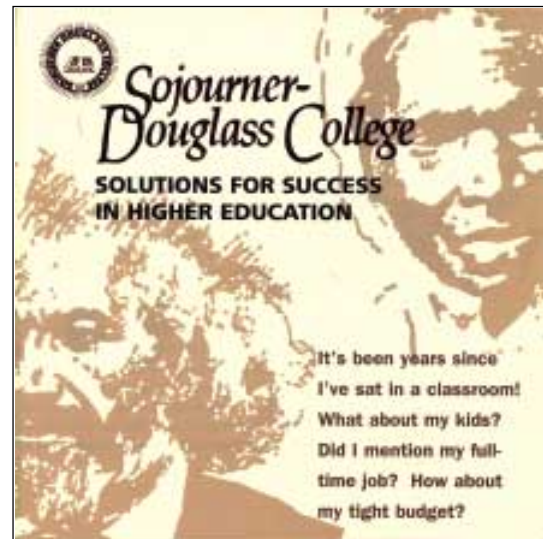
Funded with a grant of \$650,600 from BCDSS, AdVANtage II intended to provide transportation services for up to 500 welfare to work recipients as they conducted job searches and traveled to training sites and job assignments. In addition, 24 selected welfare recipients would train as self-employed transportation providers, as well as certified Minority Business Enterprise (MBE) owners. The goals of the program were: (1) to transform welfare recipients into entrepreneurs and (2) to obtain capable, reliable and affordable vehicles to transport other transitioning employees.

Once applicants were identified, they were required to complete a two-step application process. After their basic reading, mathematical and comprehension skills were tested, applicants interviewed with two members of the project team. Twenty-five candidates were selected for the first incoming class.

Because the program was originally designed for applicants to lease vans themselves, applicants were required to be creditworthy. When the participants could not obtain individual bank loans, AdVANtage II had to acquire the vans. The project bought decommissioned sedans and station wagons from public and private companies. All of the vans are accessible to passengers with disabilities. The tax-exempt status of the college also allowed the acquisition of some vehicles at no cost. MTA helped launch the program by donating the first three vans of the fleet, as well as inspecting and refurbishing others. In addition, MTA technicians served as technical advisors to the project staff while they purchased five other vehicles from auctions.

Entrepreneurs participated in an intensive one-year training curriculum that covered basic business, transportation, and marketing skills, along with assistance with incorporation as MBEs. Experienced transportation industry consultants designed the curriculum specifically for the program. Members from the Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE) also served as consultants and mentors to the participants, helping them refine their business plans.

After its first year, AdVANtage II transformed 18 former welfare recipients into transportation owners/operators.





*The AdVANtage II program provides reverse-commute services to low-income Baltimore residents.*



## **AdVANtage II Service**

AdVANtage II provides affordable transportation assistance for low-income individuals and welfare recipients traveling to job training, job searches and work sites. Ninety-five percent of the service is reverse commute. A fleet of 28 vans (including 10 spares) serves scheduled routes to Anne Arundel County, Cecil County, District of Columbia, Harford County, and Howard County. AdVANtage services operate on fixed route schedules and are designed in conjunction with MTA to fill in service gaps without competing with existing bus routes.

Baltimore City riders can access the service at five origination points throughout the city. Eighty-five percent of the riders are transitioning welfare recipients who use public transportation to reach the pick up points. Passenger fares range from \$4.00 to \$9.00. Actual costs average \$4.00 to \$11.00 daily, but may be subsidized by TANF or employers. The TANF assistance is temporary, usually terminating after two months of full-time employment. Employers occasionally contribute transportation costs, also on a time-limited basis.

AdVANtage II operates an average of 240 trips daily. Using a manual scheduling and routing system, service begins as early as 4:00 a.m. Monday through Friday and runs until 12:30 a.m. Weekend service begins operates between 10:30 a.m. and 9:00 p.m. During the summer, the drivers also carry an average of 60 children per day to recreational activities and field trips.

AdVANtage II has proven to be a successful venture, with 18 van enterprises still in operation. An evaluation process and customer satisfaction survey are in development. Staff is working to transition the training program into a business beyond the initial funding period.

## Lessons Learned

After careful review of the project, the AdVANtage II staff recognized several problems and issues that needed improvement and tried to continue program development accordingly.

- **Unrealistic Start-Up Budget.** After assessing the needs of the program, the project staff realized that a more realistic budget would have been closer to \$1.5 million for the first year of operation. They based their funding need on the experiences of a suburban Maryland Department of Social Services program that managed a paratransit operation. Originally, they did not consider the geographic and demographic differences between urban Baltimore and suburban Baltimore County.
- **Institutional Support.** The project is still in partnership with Sojourner Douglass College. After the initial grant expired, AdVANtage II formed a company with SDC to keep the business afloat. AdVANtage II, LLC, is funded by Sojourner-Douglass College; drivers are subcontractors to AdVANtage II. “This project would not have been more than a pipe dream without the extensive support from Sojourner Douglass,” notes AdVANtage II Project Director Jamal Mubdi-Bey.
- **Subsidized Wages.** The college, as well as other outside sources, provides funds to supplement the drivers’ revenue. Through the limited liability corporation, operators are guaranteed an hourly wage of \$8.00 per hour and 20 hours per week, regardless of the number of trips they provide.
- **Business Development.** The project now markets the service to vendors (hired by BCDSS), economic development directors and employers, and negotiates contracts for the project. AdVANtage II staff develops reverse commute fixed route service in response to employer needs, and subcontracts with AdVANtage II van drivers to manage and serve a particular route. The MTA co-hosts monthly vendor meetings to discuss operational issues and business development with AdVANtage II and employers.
- **Continuous Training.** As the AdVANtage II service continues to expand, the project staff understands the need for additional driver

training and education. Drivers will be retrained in computer and customer service skills, especially when dealing with senior citizens and persons with disabilities. Whereas drivers completed some accounting training, the staff realized the need for more advanced computer training.

## Challenges

**The most demanding obstacles facing the project were by far, financial.**

Acquisition of vehicles remained the most difficult challenge, due to the unsatisfactory credit histories of the clients. Financial constraints also forced the staff to reduce the number of entrepreneurs, but they were able to work more efficiently and effectively with a smaller, more qualified group.

Entrepreneurs need ongoing financial support during the transition from welfare to work.

**Working with former welfare recipients also presented some cultural obstacles.** BCDSS counsels some very difficult, “hard to place” clients. Baltimore City has the state’s largest number of residents who have remained on welfare for more than five years, making the transition even more difficult. Compared to the rest of the United States, Maryland ranks lowest with the percentage of residents who are transitioning off of welfare by actively job-hunting and working.

**Staying in touch with van drivers also proved to be a challenge.** In the initial stages of recruitment, many of the candidates were difficult to reach because they did not own cellular telephones. Project staff quickly understood the importance of supplying van operators with telephones. Time management became an issue with some of the transitioning clients, since being at work regularly and on time was a departure from their normal routine.

**Finally, drivers need an ongoing source of financial support during their transition to self-sufficiency,** perhaps for as long as three years. As a result, the AdVANtage II staff anticipates that it will expand the types of services it offers the van operators in the future, as well as continue the financial, training and mentoring support it currently provides.

# Case Study:

## Contra Costa County

Contra Costa County is located in the San Francisco Bay Area, in California. This suburban county received funding from the U.S. Department of Labor to develop a series of strategies to help participants in CalWORKs, the California welfare reform program, overcome the barriers associated with work-related travel. These include coordinating trips involving multiple transit operators (often with different fare structures and schedules) and lack of weekend and late-night service. The Department of Labor funded the following program elements:

- Train trip planners in one-stop centers (TransPac)
- Create owner/operator shuttle program
- Create children's transportation and fare voucher program
- Conduct GIS mapping analysis

### TransPac Travel Information and Incentive Program

TransPac, the cooperative transportation planning committee for six jurisdictions in Central Contra Costa County, is using DOL funding to support a series of trip planning activities and ridesharing incentives. Five desktop kiosks (similar to computer terminals) will be installed at One-Stop Centers. These kiosks will allow caseworkers to access information on the Internet about transportation programs and services, including incentive programs to encourage transit use and ridesharing. In addition, through the grant, three welfare recipients will be trained to use the computer terminals and to serve as travel planning assistants at the One-Stop Centers.

The program also includes a series of incentives to support approximately 60 days of transit use or ridesharing activities. Recipients may receive transit passes, gasoline vouchers for carpool or "school-pool" participation, or vanpool fare subsidies.

## Shuttle/Children's Transportation

The Contra Costa County Social Services Department (SSD) is administering both the shuttle program and children's transportation program. The program was designed to eliminate two of the biggest barriers preventing parents from getting jobs: transportation and child care. Through the van/shuttle program, CalWORKs participants are trained to operate vans to provide community transportation services, including transportation to school and child-care. The program was modeled after AdVANtage in Anne Arundel County, Maryland.

SSD contracted with a private transportation operator to lease 15-passenger vans for CalWORKs clients to operate. (The grant cannot be used to purchase capital equipment.) SSD caseworkers identify and refer candidate clients for the program, based on SSD and DOL criteria (under development). The private operator has responsibility to screen and train shuttle drivers. Screening is intended to identify those with felonies, outstanding warrants or DUI tickets. The operator fingerprints candidates, conducts drug and alcohol tests, and helps them obtain a commercial drivers license (CDL).

SSD used a GIS analysis and inventory of available transportation services to identify potential transportation service areas. Potential markets included social service agencies, public housing authorities, and Head Start. (Although Head Start already operates some transportation, this new program can complement existing service and address some unmet needs.)

The program initially focused on East County: Brentwood, Antioch, Pittsburg, and Oakley. This area has a high concentration of Hispanic welfare clients, and the fewest transit opportunities in Contra Costa County. In addition, many of the county's social service agencies are located in East County. With success, the program will be expanded to West County, which has the highest concentration of welfare clients. Eventually, the program would be expanded to Central County as well.

SSD is setting up a voucher system to cover fares for van passengers. Fares may be subsidized with funds from the participating community agencies and from CalWORKs. An evaluation program, not yet fully designed, may track the following:

- Cost per passengers
- Number of passengers
- Increased employment opportunities (GIS)



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and the Contra Costa Transportation Authority

*TransPac offers county residents incentives to use transit and ridesharing alternatives.*

- Changes in travel time
- Changes in out-of-pocket costs.

The goals of the children's transportation component of this program are to carry at least 85 children (of hardest to serve clients) on the children's shuttle in the first year, and another 85 children. SSD will be able easily to track program use because children will be required to register for the transportation services.

## **Lessons Learned**

Program staff believed that the restrictions of DOL funding, limiting program participation to a narrowly defined group of hardest to serve clients, "tied their hands." They questioned whether creating 10 jobs and transporting 85 children, out of the pool of "hardest to serve clients" was providing enough help for the community.

In retrospect, SSD would have prepared a market analysis earlier in the planning stages ("Know the market in advance."): (1) needs assessment, (2) understand the client base; and (3) identify markets. With this information in advance, SSD could have incorporated more detailed performance specifications in the request for proposal for a van operator.

# Case Study:

## Good News Garage

The Good News Garage, located in Burlington, Vermont, is a vehicle ownership program created and managed by Lutheran Social Services of New England, Inc. (LSSNE). The Good News Garage refurbishes automobiles donated by individuals from New England, New York, and New Jersey and sells them to eligible Vermont residents for the cost of the repairs. The concept of “transportation equity” for low-income families and individuals is central to the mission of the Good News Garage.

The Good News Garage began operation in July 1996 with a start-up grant of \$35,000 from Wheat Ridge Ministries. The garage was originally located in donated space in the Chittenden County Transportation Authority’s (CCTA) bus maintenance facility, but was moved to a former motorcycle repair facility in downtown Burlington. The program currently has an annual budget of \$415,000 and began to break last year. Funding for the Good News Garage comes from a variety of sources, including LSSNE, grants from private and public agencies, private donations, and revenues from the sale of refurbished cars. Administrative expenses are minimized and the program continues to rely on the help of a number of volunteer staff members. LSSNE provides payroll and other support services. Most of the program budget covers staff salaries, the expenses associated with operating the garage itself and related expenses such as vehicle transport.

### Recipients

The Good News Garage’s donated wheels program targets low-income residents of Vermont. When the program started, individuals with a valid driver’s license, a monthly income that did not exceed 225 percent of the federal poverty level, and a need for transportation to work, training, medical care, or child care, were eligible to apply for a vehicle. Because of the growing waiting list for vehicles, however, eligibility is now limited to those with a monthly income that does not exceed 150 percent of the federal poverty level, and applications from individuals with a need for transportation to work are given priority. In the near future, access to public transit service (to the places and at the times that the applicant needs to travel to work or training) will also be considered as applications are



evaluated. The Vermont Department of Social Welfare (DSW) also refers participants in Reach Up, the job-readiness component of Vermont's TANF program, to the Good News Garage. In a satellite program in Vermont's Northeast Kingdom, the Good News Garage provides vehicles for individuals trained and hired through a program funded with a federal Department of Labor (DOL) competitive grant; in that region, the recipients of the Good News Garage vehicles will meet the more stringent DOL requirements for difficult-to-serve clients.



To date, 244 individuals have received cars from the Good News Garage. About 300 individuals are currently on the waiting list, with an average wait of about six months. While the program does not track ethnic or racial background of vehicle recipients, staff believes that program clients probably mirror the ethnic/racial make-up of the Burlington population, of which about 4 percent consists of people of color. Most vehicle recipients are single

white mothers. Over time, the Good News Garage has seen more applicants and recipients in tougher financial circumstances, and a growing number of refugees, particularly from Bosnia.

## Vehicle Donation Process

The Good News Garage has no shortage of vehicles, most of which are donated by private individuals. The Good News Garage is a not-for-profit charity, so donors are entitled to receive a tax deduction for the retail value of their donated vehicle, as determined by the donor. The Good News Garage acknowledges receipt of each donation with a letter that can be used to claim the charitable deduction.

Only about half of the vehicles donated to the Good News Garage are worth repairing. Initially, all donated cars were accepted, but now only cars ten years old or less are considered (with some exceptions). Since the Good News Garage is typically responsible for transporting the vehicles to Burlington at an average cost of \$75<sup>1</sup>, an initial assessment of the vehicle's condition is made, if possible, before it is accepted. About 5 percent of the vehicles donated to the Good News Garage are older model imported or luxury cars. Since such vehicles would not be economical for recipients to operate and maintain, they are reconditioned and sold to the public at market prices to generate additional revenue for the program.

A mechanic thoroughly evaluates each donated vehicle; the assessment may take several hours to complete. The Good News Garage recently began contracting with several local garages to conduct vehicle assessments, in an

effort to increase the efficiency of scheduling repairs and matching cars to applicants. (Plans are to begin outsourcing repairs, as well.) While the condition of donated cars varies, it takes an average of seven hours to make each vehicle reliable and to pass inspection. To keep repair costs low, no body work is included, and radios or air conditioning systems are not repaired. On average, repairs cost \$773; no mark-up for administration is added. The average length of time between a vehicle's initial assessment and delivery to a recipient is about one month.

The vehicle recipient gets a detailed, itemized repair bill. Since many recipients have never owned a car before, they also receive a packet developed by the Good News Garage's Shop Manager with information about proper operation and maintenance of an automobile, tips about dealing with repair shops, and suggested garages for ongoing maintenance.

In addition to the cost of repairs, vehicle recipients are expected to pay for registration, title, state inspection, sales tax, and insurance. As part of the Reach Up program the DSW can provide up to \$400 per client for assistance with transportation, which may be applied toward Good News Garage vehicle repairs.

## **Program Feedback**

Several vehicle recipients offered the following comments about their experience with the Good News Garage.

- A reliable car, obtained at an affordable price, relieved a great deal of stress from their lives and made it much easier to take children to school or doctor's appointments, attend meetings, or get to work or training.
- All would recommend the Good News Garage without hesitation to a friend who needed transportation.
- Although the CCTA bus system could meet local Burlington travel needs, the service is neither extensive nor frequent enough to make it a useful alternative for traveling outside of Burlington. Without their Good News Garage cars, individuals would not be able to make necessary trips to other cities, including the state capital in Montpelier.
- Participants appreciated the inspection checklist and itemized bill they received with their vehicles. They felt they could trust the Good News Garage in a way they had not been able to trust mechanics or garages in the past. This was especially important to female recipients, who may lack the technical knowledge to deal confidently with automotive maintenance professionals, and to all recipients who do not have the

resources to replace or repair items unnecessarily or repeatedly until a problem is fixed.

- One recipient noted the need for a garage that low-income families can trust and expressed a desire to take her car to the Good News Garage for routine maintenance.
- Participants understood that the Good News Garage staff plainly wants to help them solve their transportation problems. That the mission of the program is so clearly communicated to applicants and vehicle recipients, and so sincerely felt by the Good News Garage staff, appears to have much to do with the personality of Director Hal Colston and the tone he sets for the organization.

Participants only had one suggestion for improving the program. They asked to be told where they stood on the waiting list and how long it would take to obtain a vehicle.

## Program Planning

The Good News Garage emerged from an LSSNE social ministry outreach effort in New England. LSSNE organized a group of congregants to identify unmet community needs and to develop services and programs to address them. During this process, the assistant director of the Chittenden County Community Action Agency proposed the idea of a community garage that would make safe, reliable cars available to individuals and families in need. The primary goal of the program would be to provide people with basic transportation that they could use to get to work and other important destinations.



The congregants were enthusiastic about the concept, and a smaller group was charged with conducting a feasibility study and finding a location for the garage. The group then proceeded to enlist the support of the Vermont congregations, LSSNE and state and local organizations. A program committee meets monthly to provide guidance and advice. The committee includes members of the original task force that oversaw the planning and implementation of the program, representatives of DSW and the public housing authority, and volunteers. Vehicle recipients were involved initially, but are now represented by agency staff members.

## Program Evaluation

In order to measure and evaluate the program's success, a survey questionnaire was distributed to the first group of vehicle recipients in January 1999. Nearly 90 percent of the 26 survey respondents had a gross monthly household income of \$1,500 or less. Nearly 70 percent needed a

## **Tips for Garage Operation**

- Plenty of parking space on-site for storage of donated vehicles and used parts is essential.
- Be selective about the donated vehicles that are accepted. The ideal vehicle still has useful life remaining in it, has been properly maintained prior to donation, does not require substantial reconditioning, and is economical to operate and maintain.
- Individuals who need transportation may not be able to fill out an application or speak to program staff because they cannot communicate in writing or do not have telephones; drop-in centers may provide a means for reaching these potential beneficiaries.
- Ironically, the better the condition and quality of the car, the lower the cost to the recipient, because fewer repairs are needed.
- Many vehicle recipients have never owned a car, so providing information about the cost of properly maintaining a vehicle and tips for operation and maintenance is important.
- Private donations have proven more successful for the Good News Garage than fleet donations. Fleet vehicles tend to be newer than those donated by individuals, but they may not have been as carefully maintained
- The Good News Garage's waiting list is not due to a lack of donated vehicles; reconditioning donated cars and getting them to recipients has been more time-consuming.
- Good publicity in local, regional or national publications or broadcasts can help to inform not only potential vehicle recipients about the program, but also vehicle donors and funding sources. Active outreach is also necessary, however. A public service announcement can be a very effective means of soliciting vehicle donations.

vehicle to get a job, keep a job, or find a better-paying job, and 46 percent were single parents who needed a vehicle to transport children (multiple responses were allowed). When asked about the single most important benefit that they gained from having their Good News Garage car, over 63 percent identified access to a job or training. Other benefits included increased income and better access to medical care, child care, affordable housing, and economical shopping opportunities. The survey will be distributed to new recipients every six months, and the results accumulated.

## Program Lessons Learned

Staff offered the following observations, which may apply to a variety of welfare-related transportation programs.

- The assistance of volunteers, both during start-up and ongoing operation of the program, is invaluable.
- Starting a new program or non-profit venture is a slow process with many logistical problems. Take the time to do formal planning. Start on a small scale and quietly, so that any issues that are likely to cause resistance to the program are not highlighted from the beginning. Give local support a chance to build.
- Collaboration among public agencies, the state legislature, and faith-based, community and non-profit organizations in Vermont was a major factor in the implementation of the Good News Garage and continues to be important to the program's growth. Gaining public support and funding has enabled the program to hire a critical mass of staff, which in turn generated and more opportunities for successful outcomes.
- Choose the right people to staff the program.
- The faith-based origin of the Good News Garage was important because of LSSNE's emphasis on developing and supporting programs to help people live meaningful lives, and the access to critical start-up funding, donated goods and services for start-up and a pool of volunteers.
- The program director's personal faith in the program's concept; his dedication to its creation, and his clear communication of its mission to program staff, vehicle recipients, agency partners and funding sources have been major factors in the success of the program.
- The simpler and more understandable the program is, the easier it is to implement and the more successful it will be.

- The results of a formal program evaluation process that measures success and tracks outcomes is very useful when approaching potential funding sources for support.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Donors sometimes transport vehicles themselves or make a tax-deductible contribution to help defray towing costs, but the Good News Garage usually pays a volunteer's one-way travel expenses by bus or train, or pays a private transport company \$1.50 per loaded mile to pick up vehicles from around New England and bring them to Burlington.



# Case Study:

## Lower San Antonio Transportation Support Project

The East Bay Asian Local Development Corporation (EBALDC), created in 1975, works with community based groups, nonprofit organizations, churches, schools, and merchant associations in Oakland, California, and neighboring communities. In 1998 EBALDC convened the Lower San Antonio Welfare to Work Partnership, a collaborative of community-based organizations, interfaith organizations, and public agencies working to develop a welfare to work plan for this Oakland neighborhood. Lower San Antonio, which has a large concentration of Asian and Mexican immigrants, has one of the highest levels of unemployment in the area.

### Program Description

As part of the initial needs assessment for the welfare to work plan, EBALDC coordinated 16 focus groups in and around the Lower San Antonio neighborhood. Focus groups were designed to identify both the job interests of TANF recipients and the barriers to employment that they encountered. Focus groups were held in seven languages: Cambodian, Chinese, English, Low Lao, Mien, Spanish, and Vietnamese.

EBALDC selected twelve community-based organizations to host the focus groups. EBALDC provided these organizations with technical assistance and the following research tools:

- Screener instrument to ensure that focus group participants were representative of the neighborhood population.
- Survey instrument to collect information about each participant's job interests, barriers to employment, and work experience.
- Focus group discussion outline to gather qualitative information about job interests and barriers to employment.

The focus groups consisted of 6-8 individuals who lived in the Lower San Antonio community and who had received TANF benefits for more than two





*The Lower San Antonio Neighborhood Plan identified strategies for revitalizing this multicultural Oakland community.*

years. The community organizations were responsible for recruiting and screening participants to ensure that they met the criteria, using the brief questionnaire provided by EBALDC. Each community organization provided a bilingual meeting facilitator and recorder, meeting space, and refreshments for participants. EBALDC provided training for meeting facilitators and recorders. The host organization was expected to prepare a set of English-language meeting notes within a week of each focus group. Each host organization received a stipend of \$900 for its efforts; every focus group participant received \$30 for his or her time.

## **Program Findings**

Focus group participants identified three major barriers to employment: language, child care, and transportation. About half said that transportation kept them from finding a job. Among the transportation issues cited were cost, safety, and routing/scheduling problems, as highlighted below.

- Participants were frustrated with bus and rail schedules – especially lack of service for graveyard and swing shifts – and long travel times. Some focus groups summed it up neatly: “Jobs are too far away.”
- Some focus group participants indicated that commuting costs were too high (although others considered transit affordable).
- About 40 percent of the women in focus groups did not know how to drive or did not have a valid driver’s license.
- Women, in particular, were concerned about safety, especially when travelling at night or early in the morning. Some women recounted prior bad experiences: “One time, I was waiting for a bus for one and a half hour. Another time, I was waiting for the bus with my two small children and I got robbed.”

## Transportation Support Program

Based on these focus group findings, EBALDC developed the Lower San Antonio Transportation Support Project. Working in collaboration with RIDES for Bay Area Commuters, EBALDC is providing transportation support to five community-based organizations. Each organization designated a transportation counselor to provide trip planning services for CalWORKs clients.

RIDES provides training for the counselors, administers incentives for clients to use transit or ridesharing (e.g., vouchers), and tracks program use. The program also provided funding for computers with Internet access to support trip planning.

Counselors work with clients to identify transportation alternatives to help them move into the work force. Resources available to the counselors, who are bilingual, include area transportation resource guides, transit maps and schedules, fare information, regional telephone travel information, and – in the near future – Internet-based transit trip planning services. Counselors will be available to assist clients with new transportation needs when they change jobs.

## What To Expect

The program’s goal is to remove transportation as a barrier to employment and to help community residents become self-sufficient. This program was designed to serve at least 35 clients per year; additional incentives were available to the community organizations for increasing their annual client base to 45.

**Women were concerned about their safety – especially when traveling late at night or early in the morning.**

EBALDC is conducting a qualitative assessment of the program to track the “rhyme and reason of success.” An intake form and log were developed to track client progress. For example, did clients miss work because of transportation? As part of the evaluation, counselors will track origin-destination pairs that clients cannot make.

## Lessons Learned

- For EBALDC, an established nonprofit community development organization, working in transportation was a new experience. For RIDES, the Bay Area’s ridesharing organization, the challenge was learning about welfare-related issues.
- For both organizations, however, one of the major challenges of this project was understanding the complex requirements of available funding sources – the strings attached – and finding creative ways to tap into these resources.
- One of the advantages of working with community-based organizations is their responsiveness to their clients. These organizations are not constrained by bureaucratic requirements and “will not lose clients in the shuffle.” Moreover, members of the target population typically do not speak English, rarely leave their community, and find transit intimidating. But the transportation counselors at community organizations speak the same language as their clients and are sensitive to their cultures, increasing the level of comfort and trust. Clients, in turn, may find it easier to seek transit information from a member of their community than to call the bus company. And because community-based organizations are local, clients don’t have to leave their neighborhood to obtain help and support.
- Community organizations may have more leeway to combine funding sources than public agencies. But because the project took advantage of county and federal funds, planners had to respond to the challenges of coordinating efforts when funding arrived at different – and not always predictable – rates.

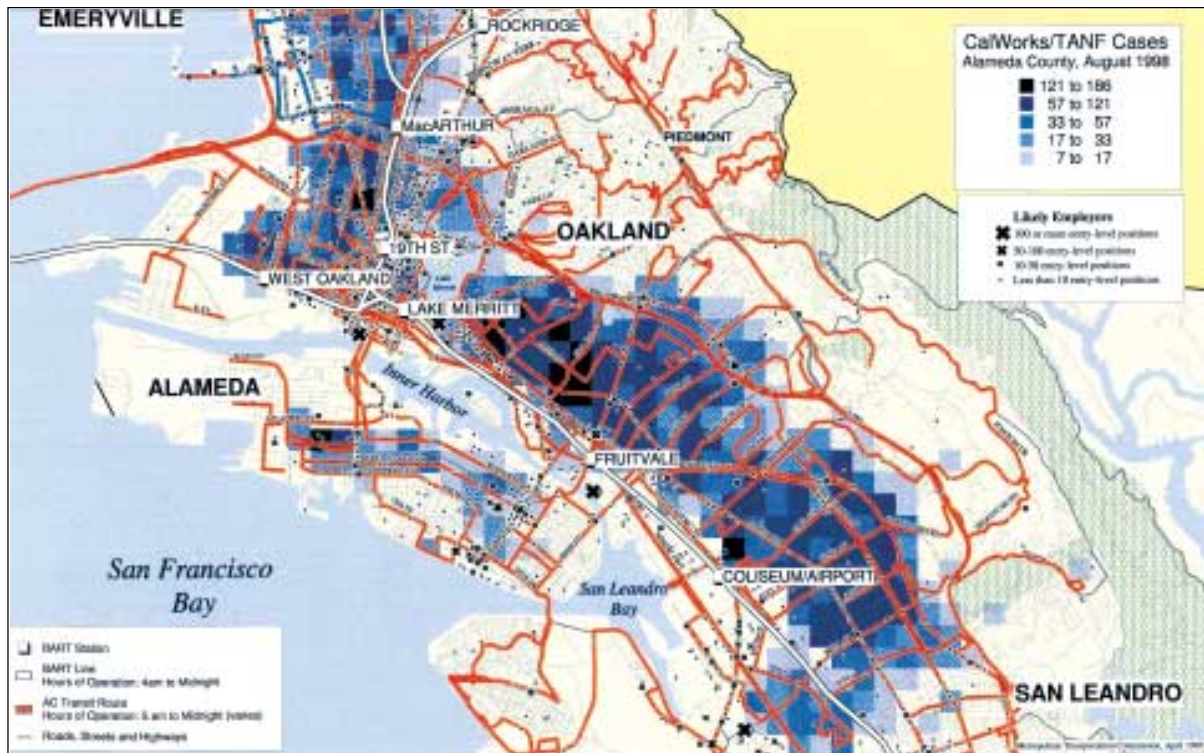
# Case Study:

## Metropolitan Transportation Commission/ AC Transit

The Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) is the transportation planning, coordinating and financing agency for the nine-county San Francisco Bay Area. Created by the state legislature in 1970, MTC functions as both the regional transportation planning agency and as the region's metropolitan planning organization (MPO). As such, it is responsible for the Regional Transportation Plan, a comprehensive blueprint for the development of mass transit, highway, airport, seaport, railroad, bicycle and pedestrian facilities. The Commission also screens requests from local agencies for state and federal grants for transportation projects to determine their compatibility with the plan.

MTC has undertaken a number of initiatives to address transportation issues facing participants in the California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids program (CalWORKs). MTC has worked with transportation planners, social service agency staff, Private Industry Councils, community-based organizations and other stakeholders to identify transportation-related barriers for the CalWORKs population and to develop practical solutions. MTC projects include the following:

- **Regional Transportation Working Group.** MTC has created a staff-level working group comprising transportation providers and county social service agencies from each of its nine counties. Members of the working group review the status of welfare-to-work transportation planning at the county level, share ideas for local implementation, and identify planning and implementation activities that may be best approached from a multi-county or regional perspective. MTC has disseminated information on state and federal welfare-to-work funding opportunities related to transportation to members of the working group for use in their local planning.
- **Transportation Resource Guides.** MTC is developing Transportation Resource Guides for each of its nine counties. The guides provide detailed information on all available transportation services in each



*Welfare recipients, potential employers, and transit services in northern California.*

county, including highway, transit, employer and private shuttles, and bicycle programs. The guides are designed to be used by CalWORKs program staff to help program participants make decisions on their transportation options.

- **County-Level CalWORKs Transportation Plans.** MTC is funding county-based activities to develop transportation plans for CalWORKs programs. The planning process is designed to bring together the key participants involved in implementing welfare reform in each of the counties (e.g., social service agency staff, private industry councils, and job training and education providers) with their counterparts in transportation and with CalWORKs participants to identify potential transportation-related barriers to obtaining and retaining a job and develop workable options to eliminate these barriers.
- **GIS Maps for CalWORKs Planning.** To support county planning activities, MTC is creating GIS-based maps showing the home locations of welfare recipients, potential job sites, licensed child care facilities, subsidized housing sites, job training locations, major medical facilities and transit routes and bus stops in each county. These maps illustrate the extent of transit coverage and highlight service gaps.

- **Regional Transit Trip Planning System.** The Regional Transit Trip Planning System will provide a computer-generated itinerary for reaching any destination served by public transit in the Bay Area based on origin, destination, time of day, and fare. This user-friendly tool will help CalWORKs participants plan public transit trips to jobs and programs and also identify trips where transit is not a viable alternative.

## County Transportation Plans

MTC used planning funds to support county-based transportation plans: \$150,000 was budgeted in FY99 and \$200,000 for FY00. As a first step, an advisory committee was established for each county with representation from the following:

- Transportation operators
- Paratransit operators
- Ridesharing coordinators
- CalWORKs program staff
- Child care agencies
- Job developers/trainers
- Private industry councils

The planning effort relied heavily on public involvement and made special efforts to involve CalWORKs clients in the process. In Alameda and San Francisco Counties, for example, MTC held focus groups with CalWORKs clients. Meetings were scheduled during the day and lasted two hours. Clients received \$30 for participating in Alameda County and “good marks” were noted in their CalWORKs files; in San Francisco County they received a supermarket gift certificate and child care was provided during the meeting. According to an MTC planner, “I’m paid to attend these meetings; so should they.” In Santa Clara and Alameda Counties, clients helped identify transportation barriers to employment and participated in brainstorming sessions to find solutions. MTC considered appointing clients to project Advisory Committees, but the required time commitment was too burdensome; instead, community-based organizations represented the client voice on the Advisory Committee. Throughout the process, MTC considered client participation “invaluable.” Clients offered very practical solutions (“They cut to the chase.”), asking for telephones at bus stops and identifying language barriers in gaining access to transportation information.

For each county, MTC prepared GIS maps to illustrate transit services, employment, and welfare transportation needs. To protect client confidentiality, information about the location of CalWORKs clients was aggregated to the street level and mapped by quarter-mile grid. Employment information was screened to eliminate jobs that were not appropriate for CalWORKs clients, most of whom are women; the analysis did not present information about heavy industrial and construction jobs, as well as jobs with no permanent address (e.g., temporary jobs, landscaping).

Not only did the maps support the analysis of transportation needs and service gaps, but it helped gain political support for the project. MTC distributed the maps to various stakeholders in the planning process, which helped build good will and support. In addition, AC Transit, which provides service in Alameda and Contra Costa Counties, was able to use GIS maps to build a case to restore 24-hour service on key bus routes.

## **AC Transit Neighborhood Circulator**

The Alameda-Contra Costa Transit District (AC Transit) serves Western Alameda and Contra Costa Counties in the San Francisco Bay Area. Representatives from the community of North Richmond approached AC Transit to ask for additional service in this low income area near Oakland.

In response to this request, AC Transit worked with the Richmond Jobs Collaborative to design Route 376. The route ran once an hour from 7:00 p.m. to 2:00 a.m. and provided location circulation with limited route deviation in a residential neighborhood. Connections were provided to the Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) rail station and to a major commercial district. Ridership started at about 200 trips per night, and decreased to about 150.

AC Transit received an FTA Access to Jobs grant for \$143,000, allowing the transit agency to increase service to 30-minute headways. AC Transit allocated \$300,000 in operating funds, and county sales tax revenues covered the local match for the federal grant. The federal grant also supports additional route planning and evaluation and marketing efforts.

## **Challenges**

One of the biggest obstacles in the planning process was the lack of information on employment placements for CalWORKs clients. Job developers, including those in the private industry councils and municipalities, proved to be the best source for this information.

One of the biggest challenges was engaging employers in the process. Employers were willing to participate in transportation programs if it benefited

all their employees – not just CalWORKs clients. MTC found that the most receptive employers were those who were already providing benefits like transportation vouchers and transit passes. But frequently, transit agencies encountered a “reality gap” when working with employers on transit alternatives – employers simply did not understand how much it cost to modify existing transit services.

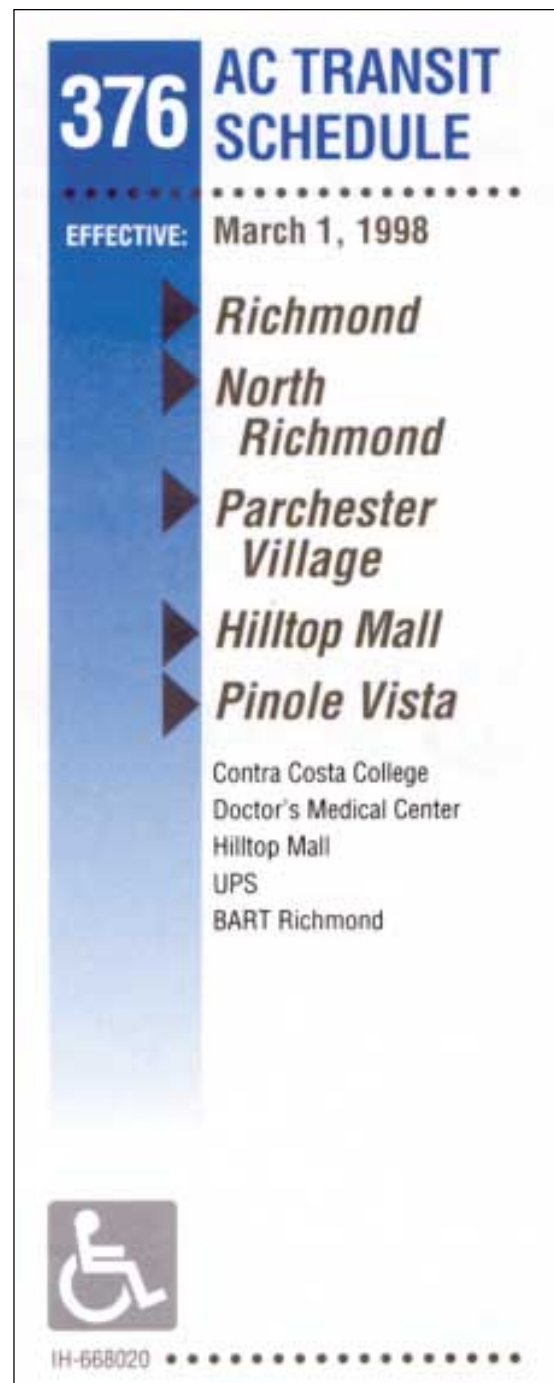
Traditional service from a transit operator is one solution, but not the only one. Participants have to be receptive to other people’s ideas and not summarily dismiss them because they are not fixed route solutions. There has to be flexibility – give and take – on both sides.

## Issues/Sustainability

Looking toward the future, planners were debating the advantages of subsidizing individuals versus funding systems improvements. Should MTC advocate policy changes in the CalWORKs legislation that address the difference between a systems and an individual approach? Transportation is one element of this debate, but it extends to other support systems as well, including child care and job training. “Do you focus on providing trackable individual subsidies or open the process up to fund a more enriched service for everyone?”

A major concern among planners was sustainability of the program benefits. What happens when the targeted CalWORKs population moves off welfare. As the “working poor” these individuals still need transportation and other support services, but there are no funding programs to support them.

MTC is working with the counties to help move the plans toward implementation. In Alameda County, transportation planners are working with social service agencies to identify potential funding sources for the recommended strategies. In Contra Costa County, the final plan included commitment letters from key players. In addition, the county social service agencies have hired transportation coordinators, which has helped provided a centralized source of information and establish a mechanism for following through with recommendations.





## Lessons Learned

Program planners and staff offered the following advice.

- Agencies learned to build on what they have. No one wants the social service agencies to take the lead on transportation. It has been a benefit for the social service agencies to see the transportation options available – transit, ridesharing, commuter check. MTC has developed resource guides to provide this information.
- The process should err on the side of inclusion. Invite individuals even if they are not expected to participate. People come to the table throughout the process; until the process begins, no one knows who they are. Have clients as intimately involved as possible. Use any mechanism – pay them – to encourage their participation.
- Expect to encounter both a lack of information and misinformation. The job of the group is to ferret out the truth – on how to get information, how to get involved, and demand and need.
- In many urbanized areas, fixed route services have been cut back over the years, especially at off-peak times. In these locales, people may not want innovative services – they just want to get their bus back. Fixed-route service has a permanence that jitneys or shuttles do not have, and riders are looking for something that will be around after their first entry-level job.

# Case Study:

## New Jersey Statewide County and Community Transportation Plans

The State of New Jersey conducted a year-long planning process to address the transportation needs created by the Work First New Jersey welfare reform initiative. With coordination and direction at the state level, each of the state's 21 counties developed a community-based transportation plan.

The project included four major phases: (1) Develop goals and objectives; (2) Conduct inventory of existing transportation services; (3) Identify transportation needs and service gaps; and (4) Develop service alternatives. At the conclusion of the planning process, the state incorporated selected county-level plans into its application for FTA Access to Jobs funding.

### Planning Process

A Project Oversight Group (POG) was convened at the state level. Original representation included New Jersey Department of Transportation, New Jersey Transit Corporation (NJ TRANSIT, the statewide transit operator), and New Jersey Department of Human Services. As the project moved forward, the New Jersey Department of Labor and the State Employment & Training Commission joined the committee. The state hired a consultant team to facilitate the planning process and to provide technical assistance to the county steering committees.

Each county set up a local steering committee to oversee the planning activities. Steering committee membership varied among counties, but was intended to include representation from county and local transportation/planning offices, social service agencies, transportation providers, child-care providers, workforce investment board staff, and major employers. Committees met periodically throughout the planning process to set direction and to review technical materials prepared by the consultant.

Two statewide “transportation summit” meetings were convened during the course of the project. Meetings were intended to disseminate information

about the progress of the project and to build county-level support. The first summit served as the project kick-off meeting and was designed to introduce the project to county planners. At this all-day meeting, representatives from the state summarized the overall goals of the project and asked each county to complete, with the assistance of the consultant team, the following four tasks:

- Establish a county steering committee to oversee the planning process; adopt planning goals and objectives; identify barriers to service coordination.
- Prepare an inventory of existing transportation services; identify Work First and transit dependent populations; identify major origins and destinations for these groups.
- Identify transportation service gaps; estimate demand for transportation services.
- Develop transportation service design and service delivery alternatives; prepare final plan for selected alternatives.

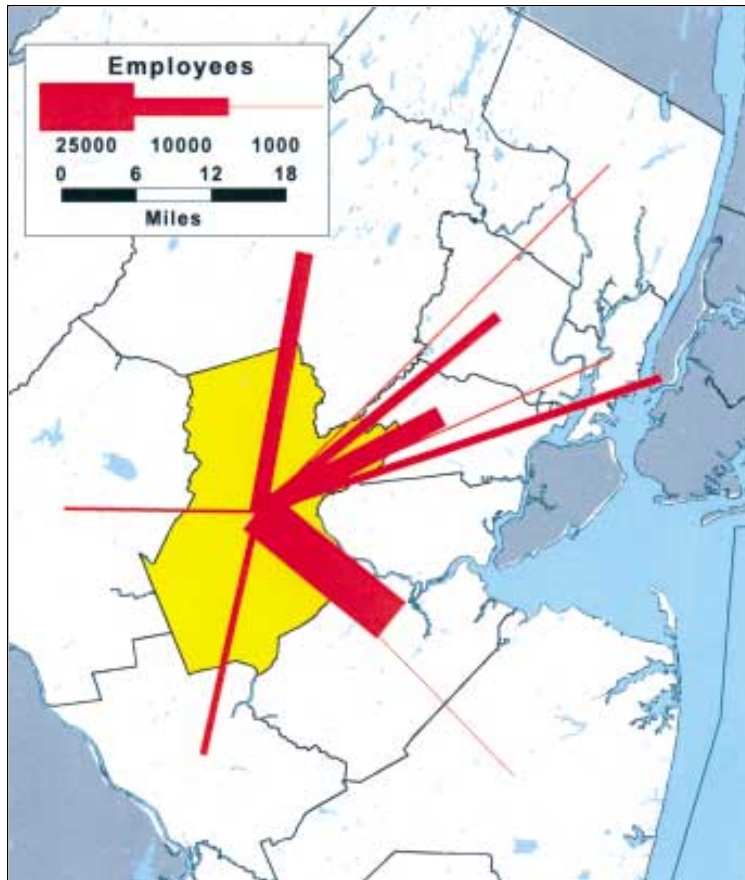
These would form the basis of each county's coordinated transportation plan.

## **Needs Assessment**

As part of the planning process, local steering committees evaluated the mobility needs of Work First New Jersey clients, along with other transit-dependent groups, including seniors, persons with disabilities, and other clients of human service agencies. This project incorporated several strategies for identifying these transportation needs, including extensive use of geographic information systems (GIS) software to map the location of welfare clients and travel destinations, surveys and focus groups with Work First participants, and interviews with transportation stakeholders.

GIS software was used to map locations of welfare clients, major employers, support services, and day care facilities, along with public and private transit routes. This provided a visual and statistical comparison of travel patterns and transit availability that enabled counties to identify transit needs and potential solutions. Of particular value were the computer-generated maps showed differences in service availability by time of day or day of week; this information helped target areas with limited access to jobs with non-traditional shifts.

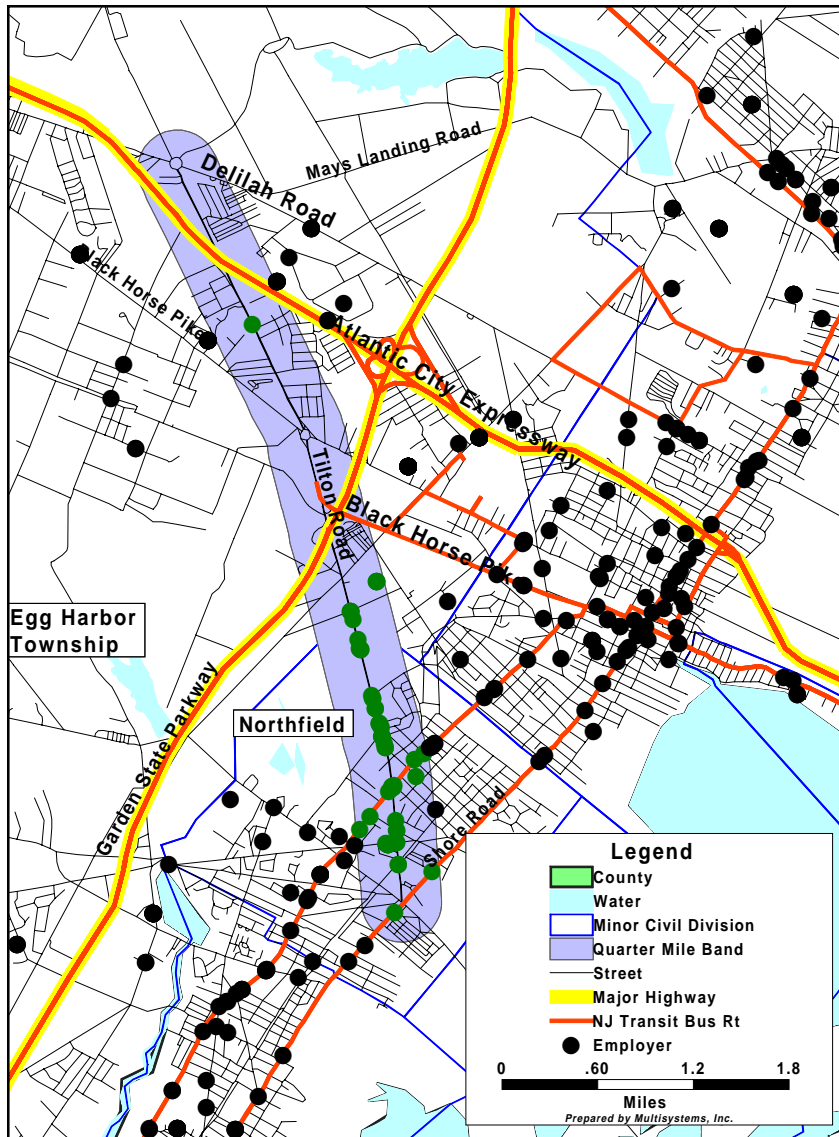
Several counties distributed brief written surveys to Work First clients to assess their transportation needs. In Atlantic County, for example, a survey



*GIS analysis highlighted inter-county commuting patterns.*

was distributed over a four-week period at two county welfare offices with the following questions:

- Do you have a valid driver's license?
- Do you own a car that you can use to travel to work or program activities?
- If you do not own a car, does someone in your household own a car that you can use to travel to work or program activities?
- If you own a car, is it in good working order?
- If you own a car, is it registered and insured?
- Is there a bus stop or train station within a 5-10 minute walk of your home?
- Will you need transportation to child care for more or all of the days you will be working?



*This commercial corridor in Atlantic County was not well-served by transit.*

Survey findings were used to help estimate demand for new transit services in each county. Among these individuals in Atlantic County, for example, about one in five had access to a road-worthy vehicle and more than 40 percent said they would or might need child care transportation.

When steering committees compared the availability of existing transit services to the identified mobility needs, a picture of transportation service gaps emerged. Although New Jersey has an extensive network of bus, rail, and paratransit services, especially in the state's urbanized areas, the needs assessment showed service schedules and frequencies did not necessarily accommodate the travel needs of Work First New Jersey participants. Major service gaps included the following:

- Lack of transit services in rural and suburban communities

- Lack of service at night to accommodate third shift work trips
- Lack of weekend service in some communities
- Inadequate service frequency
- Long travel times, especially for regional trips

In addition, existing paratransit or human service agency transportation systems were widely used, but often operating at capacity and unable to meet the growing demand for services. Other concerns included the high costs of transportation and limited information about transportation alternatives.

## Service Recommendations

Steering committees developed a wide range of services and programs to respond to the identified service gaps. Typical strategies included the following:

- Modifications to existing bus routes to increase frequency, add destinations, or provide connections to other services
- New services, operating on fixed or flexible routes and schedules, to link county residents with regional transit services or major destinations
- Increased coordination of existing paratransit services, including establishment of transportation brokers
- Expansion of paratransit systems to offer service to new user groups or during additional hours
- Programs to help low-income individuals purchase and operate vehicles
- Employer shuttles
- Increased distribution of public transportation information to passengers, including trip planning services
- Introduce incentives for using transit passes
- Encourage ridesharing

Each county plan summarized the projected demand for each service recommendation, estimated costs, and implementation issues.

## Lessons Learned

One key factor in the success of the program was the strong support from the Governor. Her support meant that commissioners and senior policy staff members were at the table from the beginning and met regularly throughout the course of the project. At the same time, finding or developing local leadership was critical. Some places already had a strong local leader and vision. But for some, the process created the structure to build leadership at the county level. In addition, the most successful local programs developed a real partnership between transportation and social services.

████████████████████  
The support of the  
Governor was key to the  
success of the project.  
████████████████████

While the state did not encounter turf issues at the department level, some counties did not welcome state involvement. It took a long time to overcome local resistance to this project in several counties. One incentive for participation was financial. The state established a Transportation Innovation Fund to support selected programs developed through the planning process. Counties were required to complete their local transportation plans in order to apply for those funds. Peer pressure was another incentive. Eventually, even the most reluctant counties participated in the process once it became clear that their colleagues in other counties were on-board.

The state identified the following conditions for success:

- Establish a very specific – and not too lengthy – product-oriented process.
- Establish clear goals.
- Nurture relationships to support the development of leadership.
- Set up parallel management structures at state and local levels (i.e., the state-level POG and county-level Steering Committees had representation from the same types of agencies and organizations).

Finally, welfare reform was a very visible issue with a diverse constituency and the timing was right to support this planning initiative.

# Case Study:

## Pinellas County Transportation Disadvantaged Program

Pinellas County is a narrow peninsula located on Florida's west coast. Tampa Bay borders the County on the east and the Gulf of Mexico on the west. Pinellas is the second smallest county in Florida and the most densely populated; major cities are St. Petersburg and Clearwater. WAGES clients are concentrated in St. Petersburg, along with areas of Seminole, Largo, Clearwater, and Tarpon Springs. Jobs tend to be scattered throughout the county, with concentrations in Clearwater and Oldsmar in the northern part of the County; some residents commute into Hillsborough County/Tampa.

The Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority (PSTA) provides extensive route coverage in St. Petersburg, but service outside the city is more limited. Moreover, commercial sites are typically designed with the buildings set back toward the rear of the property with no access for pedestrians traveling from a nearby bus stop or sidewalk. The lack of adequate pedestrian access, such as sidewalks or walkways connecting bus stops to nearby buildings, presents a considerable mobility challenge.

### Pinellas County WAGES Transportation Program

In 1996, Florida enacted the Work and Gain Economic Self-sufficiency Act (WAGES). Like many statewide agencies in Florida, WAGES operates in a decentralized fashion and WAGES coalitions are free to develop and implement local plans and programs, subject to the approval of the State Board.

The Pinellas County WAGES Coalition elected to use a one-stop approach for providing welfare-reform services. WAGES clients are referred to one of three WAGES One-Stop Centers located in the county. WAGES case managers are responsible for developing a plan for each client including support services such as transportation and childcare. Case managers are



programmed to have about 75 active clients; however, they have been overloaded with more than 100 clients apiece. As of June 1999, there were 1,200 active WAGES clients in Pinellas County.

During the intake process, case managers interview WAGES beneficiaries to determine their needs. According to one of the One-Stop Center case managers interviewed as part of this case study, about 80 percent of Pinellas County's WAGES recipients have transportation needs,

particularly involving daycare transportation. Many of the problems relate to schedule conflicts between work hours and available transportation. Others have no vehicle available for transportation or have travel patterns that make it difficult to use the bus.



According to all three One-Stop Center directors, the biggest transportation issue relates to coordinating daycare and after school transportation with work trips. In many cases single mothers with several children might have to make two or more drop-offs and pick-ups related to childcare or school before and after work. These

multiple stops make makes it virtually impossible to use public transportation, particularly in an area as spread out as Pinellas County.

The One-Stop Centers also reported problems with the available transportation services. Some of the issues relate to the spatial mismatch between where people live and where the jobs are. In some cases, a bus might be available to get to work, but does not run late enough to get home from work. In other cases, jobs are available across the Bay in Tampa; however, there is limited transportation available between the two counties. Finally, the Pinellas Suncoast Transportation Authority (PSTA) system focuses around timed transfers, often centered at area shopping malls. While this route structure makes it convenient for shopping trips, the multiple layovers for timed transfers (sometimes two or more on a single run) can add 20 minutes to the route, making bus service a less attractive option for workers and those coordinating multiple trips.

## **Transportation Disadvantaged Program**

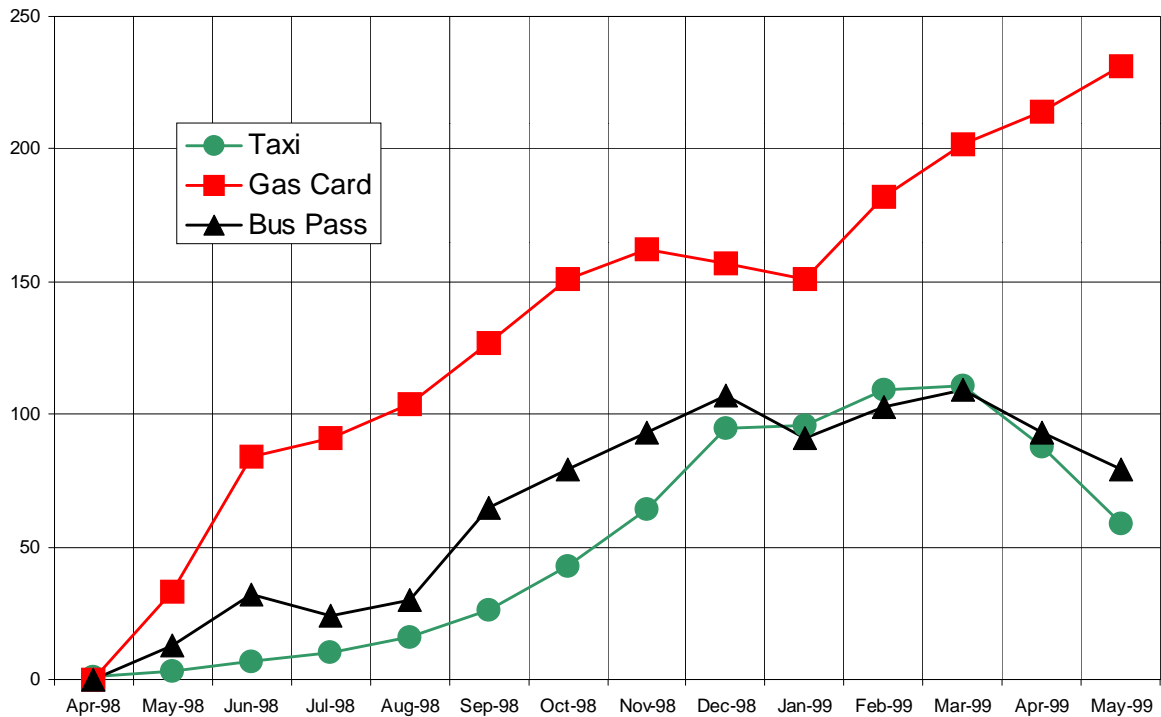
The Pinellas County Transportation Disadvantaged (TD) Program was established in 1979.<sup>1</sup> In 1990, the Florida Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged designated the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) as the "Community Transportation Coordinator" for Pinellas County. In addition to its planning role, the MPO then became responsible for managing the County's TD Program and for coordinating the provision of all TD services in Pinellas County.

In 1992, the MPO contracted with Greater Pinellas Transportation Management Services (GPTMS) to broker transportation services for the TD Program. Under the contract, GPTMS brokers TD transportation services provided by 10 local taxicab companies and other private for-profit and non-profit transportation providers. Later that year, the local Medicaid office started to place its clients through the brokered system as well.

In 1997, the local WAGES Coalition became the second agency, along with Medicaid, to purchase transportation through the GPTMS service brokerage. The Pinellas County WAGES transportation allowance covers the cost of the following transportation services for program participants for up to a year (unless otherwise indicated):

- **PSTA Bus Pass Program.** Free 31-day bus passes are provided through the PSTA Bus Pass Program. The passes are good for unlimited trips on any of more than 40 local fixed routes operated by PSTA. About 100 passes a month are distributed to WAGES clients.
- **Gas Credit Cards.** A \$50 per month gas credit card is provided for eligible WAGES clients who own cars. These gas cards may be used at Shell service stations. About 210 gas cards a month are distributed to WAGES clients.
- **Vanpooling.** Bay Area Commuter Services (BACS), a non-profit organization based in Tampa, has been working to develop vanpooling as an option for WAGES clients. One of the difficulties has been finding qualified drivers who are able to pass the required credit check. Another issue has been whether the vanpools may transport children. There were no active vanpools serving WAGES clients at the time of this case study. During the summer of 1999, three vanpools were started: two for employment trips and one for training trips. Two additional vanpools were planned for training trips.
- **Mileage Reimbursement.** Under this program, owners of vehicles used to transport WAGES clients are reimbursed at the rate of 29 cents per mile for employment-related transportation. Before June 1999, the reimbursement was only 13 cents per mile and few participated. There currently are no participants in this program; however, once the new reimbursement rates are advertised the MPO expects to see individuals take advantage of this option.
- **Ridesharing Allowance.** Ridesharing allowances of \$50 per month are provided to drivers who rideshares (this allowance may be provided in addition to the mileage reimbursement described above). Initially, this

## Program Participation



Source: GPTMS

program was only funded for \$15 per month and few persons took advantage of it. As is the case for mileage reimbursement, there currently are no participants in this program; however, once the new reimbursement rates are advertised the MPO expects to see individuals take advantage of this option.

- **Taxi Transportation.** Taxi transportation is provided for employment-related trips (including job interviews and day care and after-school transportation). At the time of the site visit, taxi service was being granted for up to 30 days. After 30 days, additional trips may be authorized on a case-by-case basis. During the summer of 1999, the Pinellas County TD Program negotiated an agreement with the Hillsborough County Community Transportation Coordinator to allow Hillsborough taxicabs to be reimbursed for returning Pinellas County's WAGES clients home from work. WAGES clients currently make about 500 taxi trips per month.
- **Charity Cars.** From August 1998 until June 1999, 55 Charity Cars<sup>2</sup> were provided to WAGES participants who needed an auto. Fifty-three are still on the road (one was returned and one broke down and

was not repaired). The vehicles were particularly useful for persons working second shifts who needed transportation at night. Although the program was well received in Pinellas County, the Charity Cars contract ended in June 1999 and this option was withdrawn from the list of available transportation services included under the WAGES program. Charity Cars is no longer participating as a WAGES contractor anywhere in Florida. Since Charity Cars ceased operating in Pinellas County, the TD Program has been exploring ways to develop a new vehicle voucher program and hopes to implement a similar program in the near future.

- **New Service: Tri-County Initiative.** One of the fastest growing employment hubs in the Tampa Bay region is the Oldsmar area, located in northeastern Pinellas County. Including the incorporated City of Oldsmar and the area extending two miles north and one mile east of it, are approximately 1,200 companies and 7,500 employees. The area includes the Tri-County Business Park where the largest concentration of employers is located. In response to the area's need for workers, in June 1999, the MPO launched a Tri-County Initiative to establish express van and bus services to Oldsmar from lower income urban centers in Pasco, Pinellas and Hillsborough counties. The service, which began in November 1999, will transport newly trained clients of the region's WAGES programs from these areas to job sites within the Oldsmar area. The Tri-County Initiative is being funded by grant funds drawn from a state appropriation intended to support welfare-to-work initiatives such as this one.

## Program Planning

In Florida, the stated goal of the WAGES program is to promote "self-sufficiency." That goal has served as a cornerstone for the development of the WAGES transportation program in Pinellas County. In 1999, the local WAGES Coalition received \$6.5 million through the state for the provision of WAGES-related services. About \$400,000 was earmarked for transportation.

The Pinellas WAGES Transportation Program results from the combined efforts of a number of people and agencies working together to plan and implement a diversified strategy of providing transportation resources to WAGES clients. The group included representatives from the MPO's TD Transportation Program, GPTMS, the WAGES coalition, Lockheed-Martin (which provides case management), and others. The Pinellas Program closely follows common transportation planning models that:

- Identify goals (to promote self-sufficiency)

- Establish the transportation needs (for a variety of transportation programs)
- Develop programs to meet those needs (through cooperation and flexibility)

The Pinellas WAGES coalition selected the MPO's TD Transportation Program for several reasons. First, the TD Transportation Program had been in existence since 1990, and GPMTS had been the broker since 1992. Both had a proven track record of working with the TD Program and Medicaid. Second, the coalition was looking for a program that was broader than the PSTA bus service, which provides only fixed-route and ADA complementary paratransit service for persons who have disabilities. Finally, the program offered flexibility and a willingness to adjust as the needs became apparent.

The WAGES transportation program continues to evolve in Pinellas County. Programs are modified and added, as needed. For example, when the ridesharing allowance failed to attract WAGES clients, the MPO, in consultation with the other stakeholders, decided to increase the incentive from \$15 per month to \$50 per month in order to pique interest. When Charity Cars dropped out of the program, the MPO began looking for other options and is in the process of developing a vehicle voucher program modeled after Charity Cars.

## **Program Evaluation**

In 1998, the MPO was awarded the "Innovation of the Year Award" from the Florida Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged for its work with the local WAGES Program.

Although there has been no formal evaluation, on the whole, those interviewed agreed the Pinellas WAGES Transportation Program is very successful. Much of the credit was given to David McDonald of the MPO staff for his ongoing effort to make the program work for the agencies and WAGES clients.

There also is a Transportation Subcommittee of the WAGES Coalition that includes representatives from Lockheed-Martin, Goodwill Industries, BACS, PSTA, and social service agencies. There also is participation by WAGES Program clients representing transportation and childcare issues. The subcommittee will be working with the MPO to further evaluate and monitor program successes and problems.

A few problem areas have already been identified, such as poor taxi driver attitudes; these are being addressed. Some other programs are

underutilized; however, modifications have been made to stimulate interest and participation. The MPO is actively working with BACS to develop vanpool opportunities, both for training and employment transportation. The five areas most in need of attention, according to McDonald, include:

- Need to implement vanpools (in process).
- Need to develop more commuter express routes.
- Need for more employer involvement (e.g., supporting vanpool programs).
- Need to raise incentives for rideshare and mileage allowances (in process).
- Need to replace Charity Cars with a new vehicle voucher program (in process).

**Case managers can draw from a variety of strategies to address transportation needs for their clients. This gives them an advantage over programs that rely on a single approach.**

## Lessons Learned

Providing transportation choices has been a key element in the success for the Pinellas County WAGES Program. Developing and implementing a variety of transportation programs rather than a one- or two-dimensional approach to providing service has proven very effective. According to the WAGES Coalition, case managers have a good set of tools from which to draw on for providing transportation services. Other coalitions that rely on simple solutions – such as gas credits or vehicle fix-up programs – appear to be at a disadvantage because they can only offer one type of strategy, according to a One-Stop Center director.

Another key element in the success of the Pinellas County WAGES Program appears to be the ability of the program to reinvent itself on an as-needed basis. According to everyone interviewed for the case study, the keys to success in Pinellas County center on the cooperation and flexibility exhibited by all of the agencies involved in the process of developing and implementing the transportation program. When a strategy does not work, such as the rideshare allowance, staff works to make improvements. When a service provider drops out of the program, like Charity Cars did, staff develops an equivalent approach to provide a comparable level of service.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Chapter 427, F.S., defines “Transportation Disadvantaged” as those persons who because of physical or mental disability, income status, or age are unable to transport themselves or purchase transportation. These individuals are dependent upon others to obtain access to health care, employment, education, shopping, social activities, or other life-sustaining activities. Transportation disadvantaged, as defined in Statute, also includes children who are disabled or high-risk or at-risk as defined in Chapter 411.202, F.S.
- <sup>2</sup> Charity Cars, based in Florida, was founded to provide fixed-up automobiles to persons who were economically disadvantaged and needed a car. It precedes the WAGES programs. When WAGES began, Charity Cars was under contract to several WAGES coalitions to provide Charity Cars to eligible WAGES clients. According to Charity Cars’ founder, David, the experience was an “abysmal failure,” as it was difficult to work within the WAGES program guidelines. Charity Cars is no longer a vendor for the WAGES program, although it continues to provide fixed-up automobiles to persons who are economically disadvantaged.

# Case Study:

## San Diego Workforce Partnership

The San Diego Workforce Partnership, Inc., was created in 1974 through an official agreement between the City and County of San Diego. Serving as San Diego's regional Private Industry Council, the Partnership provides comprehensive training, placement and career planning for individuals throughout San Diego.

In July 1998, the Partnership collaborated with several local faith-based, community, and state organizations to develop a welfare-to-work program to address child-care and transportation issues, develop employment opportunities, and enhance the community's capacity to support residents who are transitioning from welfare to the workplace. The resulting program received \$5 million from the U.S. Department of Labor Welfare to Work competitive grant program. The 18-month project was initiated in October 1998.

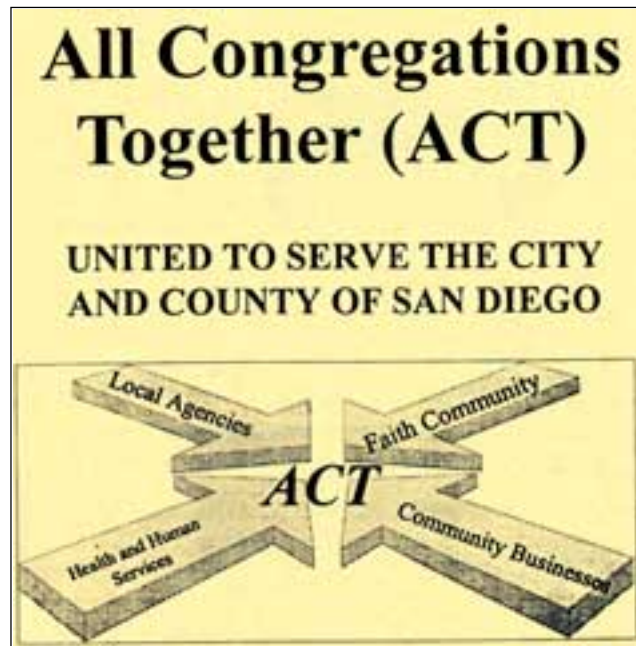
The project targets residents of an impoverished inner city area in southeastern San Diego. Nearly 15,000 residents in the service area receive public assistance, of whom about 5,000 are eligible for the project. About 60 percent of the residents in this diverse community are Hispanic, 23 percent are African American, 11 percent are white, and 5 percent are Asian. The community is also home to a significant percentage of refugees from Central Africa and East Asia. Major employment centers are at least five miles from the targeted neighborhood and are difficult to reach without specialized transportation. Limited near-by job opportunities, a lack of adequate culturally appropriate child-care services, and inadequate transportation services further compound the barriers to employment among targeted program participants.

The San Diego Regional Welfare to Work Transportation Coalition was formed to address these transportation needs. Coalition members include the City and County of San Diego, the American Red Cross, regional transportation planners and operators, San Diego Department of Health and Human Services, San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) and the San Diego Workforce Partnership, Inc. The Coalition developed a transportation network to support the Work First Community Resource



Center, using the resources of two experienced transportation providers: San Diego/Imperial Chapter of the American Red Cross and All Congregations Together (ACT).

The San Diego/Imperial Chapter of the **American Red Cross** has provided transportation for more than 60 years and driver training for the past 19 years.



As the Coordinated Transportation Services Agency for San Diego (CTSA), the Red Cross maintains a fleet of 80 buses that are owned and operated by regional social services agencies, and uses a computerized scheduling and dispatch system to coordinate the regional paratransit services.

Recognizing the potential powerful role of the faith community, the San Diego Health and Human Services Agency collaborated with local churches to establish **All Congregations Together (ACT)** in 1996. This nonprofit organization was established to develop and implement community projects that promote self-sufficiency. Among its programs, ACT established Community Link (ComLink) to meet the transportation needs of welfare recipients

who are making the transition to the workplace. In the program, member churches lease their vans to ACT during down times to transport recipients and their children to and from childcare, training, and/or employment.

## Service Description

The collaborating organizations worked to develop non-traditional transportation services that would build on ACT's existing ComLink service. The member churches were eager to help and learn how their contributions could be best utilized. Research through local census data and maps indicated that fixed route service would be the most efficient and effective way to transport workers from the target community to the region's major employment areas. The Red Cross and other Coalition members designed fixed routes to three major employment centers:

- Factory jobs along the Mexican border
- Ship-building, manufacturing, and service jobs along the Pacific Coast
- Manufacturing, high tech, entry-level corporate and service jobs in the central city

Routes originate at the Community Resource Center at Chollas View, which serves as a transportation hub. The Red Cross uses 20-passenger buses to provide transportation 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

The Red Cross/CTSA worked with ACT to integrate the existing ComLink transportation services with the new program. ACT transports program participants and their

children to and from the hub in 16-passenger church vans. For some, child-care services are available at the Chollas View site; for others the ACT van service transports children to their designated care takers. At the hub, recipients board their respective buses for work. The ACT van feeder service operates from 6:00 a.m. Monday to 10:00 p.m. Saturday. The Red Cross fills in with curb-to-curb or public transit feeder service when the vans are in use for church purposes. Funded as part of the DOL grant, the transportation service is provided at no cost to the recipients until they have successfully maintained unsubsidized employment for six months.



## Transition to Public Transportation

To encourage self-sufficiency after the grant funding period, the Red Cross provides monthly seminars at Chollas View covering the region's transportation options, including vanpools and carpools. Session attendees also learn how to access transportation information. Project staff also attend in-service training seminars that focus on accessing transportation information and providing transportation information to project participants.

Project staff will approach the public transit operator about transportation sustainability in the target community after the program ends. It is anticipated that the project ridership will establish on-going demand for public transit service, enabling the operator to view welfare to work transportation as an opportunity for increasing ridership.



## Training for Transportation-Related Jobs

In addition to providing transportation services, project staff intend to place 100 recipients in unsubsidized jobs in transportation-related occupations, including delivery, shuttle, and bus drivers. Jobs will be developed at a regional shuttle van operator, the American Red Cross, San Diego Transit, and United Parcel Service (UPS).

The Red Cross is training qualified participants to obtain Commercial Driver licenses (Class B Driver). Both the Red Cross and ACT are providing participants with paid work experience (subsidized by the project) in a shuttle service setting. Participants learn how the driver deals with multiple stops and handling passengers. Participants will also obtain work experience in clerical and community settings to learn how to dispatch and track shuttle runs and schedules. Participants with Class C licenses and good driving records are being trained to drive ACT vans to transport recipients and their children to and from the hub or public transportation routes. ACT will also provide post-employment and job retention services at the Community Resource Center.

## Lessons Learned

Although the Community Resource Center will open later than anticipated, transportation service is currently operating as planned. Thus far the project appears to be a success; the following points and lessons learned are offered as advice to others seeking to establish similar programs.

**The key component for success is collaboration.** The Coalition evolved into a group with a shared mission because of the relationships that developed between the individuals representing the various organizations. According to a Coalition member, “It’s people and relationships, not organizations...”

- In the beginning there was considerable overlap of services among the providers, and numerous turf issues had to be resolved. The partners had to learn to “own” the project and how to cooperate as a group to achieve the intended goals. This process required a lot of team-building exercises. The Workforce Partnership was able to help many of the other organizations to sort out their turf issues, by focusing not only on what each group wanted but also what each group could contribute.
- The learning process is dynamic and ongoing. Not every issue can be anticipated at the start.
- Some partners will play a larger role than others, but ownership is still shared among all participants.
- At the same time, however, it is important to recognize that liability is also shared. Accordingly, it is important to review arrangements and agreements to ascertain liability (such as insurance and leases).

**The participation of the churches was a key ingredient for success.**

Consistent with their “helping mission,” the churches wanted to participate in welfare reform efforts and also sought to make more efficient use of their vans. They were eager to contribute as well as learn about efficient transportation service delivery.

- When meetings got a little off kilter, “the reverends were able to step in and calm everyone down.” In addition, the churches are willing to accept trainees as potential employees that traditional employers may not accept. In several instances, participants seemed more comfortable with the mentoring style of the churches.
- It can be difficult for secular organizations to work with faith-based groups. The challenge for the church groups was to move beyond “thinking and acting from the heart” to deal with the realities of grant rules and regulations.
- Because many agencies do not want to fund religious groups, some church organizations have attached themselves to a collaborative or formed a nonprofit corporation to create an umbrella organization for community service. For example, ACT is a nonprofit, public benefit organization. The majority of the members of its board of directors are community representatives, rather than religious leaders.

**Programs must be tailored to meet the unique needs of each community.**

Efforts should be concentrated in an area where everyone wants to participate. It is critical to have a community that really cares about its future and shares a core set of goals. For example, the intent of the Work First project was not to take the participants out of the community, but to build the community's capacity to better serve and redevelop their own community.

- It is important to listen to the community residents and recipients; they have first-hand knowledge of concerns and needs. This project had to be reality-based, taking into account the concerns, fears, and issues of the recipients, recognizing that many individuals were unaccustomed to travelling outside of their own community.
- Early involvement is key; the community must be brought before critical decisions are made.
- Communication with community residents and neighborhood organizations was honest and straightforward. The Workforce Partnership had worked previously to develop trust within the community, making it easier to obtain community buy-in and support.

**Build on existing programs and relevant initiatives.** Learn how to leverage other funding sources. The project was built on an existing community initiative, Healthy Start Project, which was familiar to the community. It had established collaboration with community organizations and the school system. In addition, the Healthy Start office is located directly across the street from the Chollas View complex.

**Sustainability should be the ultimate project goal.** It is extremely important to build a lasting infrastructure to continue service delivery beyond the term of the project. It is critical to build capacity within the community for sustainability. For example, Metro United Methodist Urban Ministry will continue project management and solicitation of funding sources. The Childcare Institute has capacity for 36 placements. The income from paid childcare services will serve as program operating revenue. The public transit operator will be approached for continuing support of the fixed route service, and consumers will be educated to identify other transportation options.

# Case Study:

## Santee Wateree Regional Transportation Authority

The Santee Wateree Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) serves four counties in central South Carolina: Clarendon, Kershaw, Lee, and Sumter. The service area is predominantly rural, with the exception of the City of Sumter. The RTA provides fixed route, demand response, subscription, and commuter services; the fixed route system is oriented around the City of Sumter. In addition, the authority has contracted with state and local human service agencies to provide client transportation throughout its four-county area. Finally, implementation of the Family Independent Act (FIA), South Carolina's welfare reform initiative, has allowed the RTA to serve new markets.

In an effort to reduce costs and to serve its markets more efficiently, the RTA introduced a Flex Route system. These routes combine the RTA's traditional door-to-door transportation for eligible agency clients with newly designed fixed-route service for the general public. The fixed route component, which required no additional resources, allows the RTA to serve the work transportation needs of low-income area residents.

Although they are adjacent, Kershaw and Lee counties have different economic and demographic characteristics. Kershaw County's economic makeup closely mirrors state averages, and less than 1 percent of the workforce is participating in the Family Independence welfare reform program. Lee County is far less affluent, however, with higher rates of unemployment, food stamp use, and participation in the state's welfare reform program. Finally, only 18 percent of Lee County's residents work within the county. Thus, not only are the jobs located outside this small county, many of the county's low-income residents may not have the resources to access those jobs.

effective June 7, 1999



LEE COUNTY CONNECTION



KERSHAW CONNECTION



COLUMBIA CONNECTION

Santee Wateree  
  
your community transportation provider

*The Santee Wateree Regional Transportation Authority introduced three flex routes that combined work trips and medical transportation*

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## Service Description

Three routes are currently in operation:

- **Kershaw Connection**, which serves the county’s Route 1 corridor and the county seat in Camden
- **Lee County Connection**, which serves the corridor from Lynchburg to the county seat in Bishopville
- **Columbia Connection**, an inter-county route, which provides service three days a week to Bishopville, Camden, and the state capital in Columbia.

This Kershaw Connection began operation in July 1998 after six months of planning and design. The system provides demand response service for clients of human service agencies, including Medicaid transportation, in combination with scheduled service for the general public at designated bus stops. In addition, there is limited curb-to-curb demand response service for the general public with 48-hour advance notice. Agency-funded participants still receive curb-to-curb transportation service, but they now must conform to scheduled transportation times; previously service was available on demand. Human service agency recipients residing outside the Kershaw Connection service zones continue to receive demand response service as they always have. In emergencies or unusual instances, where program participants cannot make the time scheduled arrangements, the system has promised to provide demand response service (the “old fashioned” way); this has taken away the concerns that some agencies and recipients may have. Four round trips operate daily, Monday through Friday, from approximately 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

The Kershaw Connection did not require any additional resources. The demand response and Flex Routes are operationally integrated via the scheduling and dispatching system so that drivers and vehicles are intermixed between the two types of service.

Service was expanded to Lee County and to Columbia in 1999. Four weekday round trips were established in Lee County, and three daily round trips serve Columbia on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays.

## Design and Implementation

Santee Wateree RTA began its planning process for flex route services by observing a system in Putnam and Flagler Counties in Florida. Back in South Carolina, they began to discuss potential service with their member counties. After Clarendon County failed to provide needed local support, the RTA initiated discussions with Kershaw County. Discussions with the initial



county, Clarendon, failed to provide the needed local support, so the system initiated discussions with Kershaw County. The county had already expressed interest in better interagency service and took a strong interest in the flex route approach. In January 1998, the Kershaw County Collaborative, including the County Department of Social Services (DSS), formally requested that their county become a pilot project for the Santee Wateree Flex Route System. An interagency transportation subcommittee was formed to work with the RTA on the detailed service approach.

**The Kershaw County Transportation Subcommittee worked with medical service providers to coordinate appointments with scheduled bus arrival times.**

The RTA used a GIS system to locate the residences of the human service agency recipients using the existing transportation system and found that most were located along the Route 1 corridor.<sup>1</sup> A system was developed

that enabled one vehicle on a fixed route schedule to provide both:

- Residence-to-destination agency funded trips, with the terminal destination located in Camden, the county's largest town, on Route 1 near the center of the county
- Time- and location-specific bus stops along the Route 1 artery, consisting of four inbound and four outbound routes terminating at Camden

The Kershaw County Transportation Subcommittee participated fully in this process, working to establish routes and schedules, inform recipients and medical service providers, involve the community, and so forth. The Subcommittee even took on the unusual task of getting medical service providers, and other agencies, in Camden to schedule appointments within 15 minutes after scheduled bus arrival at the nearest stop. This collaborative planning effort facilitated a smooth implementation of the system.

## **Role of Interagency Transportation Subcommittees**

All parties to the Kershaw Connection's development believe that the leadership and direction provided by the Transportation Subcommittee were crucial to the system's development. Further, the Kershaw County DSS Director and the Santee-Wateree planner were instrumental in soliciting Lee County's interest in participating in the system.

Human service agency collaboration has been underway in Kershaw County for several years. This collaborative spirit and process has helped to facilitate the Kershaw Connection planning and implementation process. In 1992, some of the county human service agencies initiated the Kershaw County At-Risk Collaborative as a community coalition to assist children and families to improve

the quality of life. Over time, this effort grew and its interagency activities increased. In February 1996, four county staffers from four agencies participated in a month long Primary Prevention Conference in Columbia; following this, they returned to Kershaw County and applied the skills learned to human service agency planning. One of the first things that they discovered was that lack of transportation was a major barrier to service delivery.

Simultaneously, the Santee-Wateree RTA was interested in developing the Flex Route approach. Joint meetings between the Kershaw human service agencies and Santee-Wateree RTA led to agreements between RTA and the agencies to pursue a Flex Route system to better meet the human service needs of Kershaw County. In this way, the Kershaw Connection was born in January 1998.

The Kershaw Connection was nurtured from the start by a Transportation Subcommittee comprising key officials from the Department of Social Services (DSS), the Board of Disabilities and Special Needs, Vocational Rehabilitation, other human service agencies, and Santee Wateree RTA. This subcommittee met monthly; it was a real working subcommittee with homework assignments that contributed to progress along a time line.

The Director of the Kershaw DSS and the SWRTA Planner met with the Director of Social Services in Lee County to promote the Kershaw Connection and to advise her on developing a flex route for Lee County. Lee County adopted and implemented the human services and community approach suggested; service for the Lee County Connection began in June 1999. At the same time, service began to Columbia, the state capital and a principal destination for medical trips, including a major medical center and the Veterans Administration Hospital .

**The RTA added fixed route trips using the same system resources that were previously used in this county for demand response agency service only – essentially creating a “free” benefit.**

## **Operating and Service Characteristics**

In the first 10 months of service (August 1998 through May 1999), the Kershaw Connection provided 39,743 agency trips and 3,634 fixed route trips. The fixed route trips were achieved using the same system resources that were previously used in this county for demand response agency service only – essentially a “free” benefit from the Flex Route system. Ridership is expected to increase to 4,500 or 5,000 trips per year. At approximate system costs of \$10 per trip, this is a savings of \$36,340 in the first year to county residents. The second year’s savings promise to be even greater, with anticipated ridership increases.

The RTA has not collected detailed information about its Flex Route riders. Accordingly, it is not known how many of these fixed route trips represent

additional travel by existing clients of human service agencies and how many are new trips taken by the general public. Also, while the overall level of use for welfare-related travel is not known, agency personnel know that two FIA “graduates” now ride the Flex Route for work trips. Future on-board surveys may be needed to identify characteristics of fixed-route riders.

## **The State’s Constructive Role**

The State of South Carolina has undertaken a number of activities that provide support for the local coordination demonstrated between Kershaw human service officials and the SWRTA. In the mid-1990s, the South Carolina Department of Transportation initiated the Interagency Steering Committee on Coordinated Transit. The goals of this Committee were “to enhance transportation services through improved, cost efficient and stable transportation delivery; to promote coordinated transit through the provision of transit services by a public transportation provider or a designated human service agency.” The Steering Committee represents a consortium of state governmental entities and statewide organizations formed through mutual agreement with the purpose of analyzing “critical issues affecting public transportation services and, through cooperative action, seeking to promote and encourage a stable transportation environment.” The Steering Committee meets monthly to share activities and concerns. It provides recommendations to the state Department of Transportation on demonstration coordination projects as well as recommendations on legislative action affecting coordination of transportation resources. The Committee has been instrumental in getting support for coordination demonstrations and in getting legislation to encourage and support coordination.

The state Steering Committee has specifically recognized and supported the Santee Wateree RTA Flex Route project. The Transportation Subcommittee, in December 1996, requested that Kershaw County’s federal program funds be used to develop the Flex Route system – particularly the GIS mapping and other technology to be used – instead of the usual use of these funds for vehicle purchase. The Steering Committee supported this request and the funding change was made.

The South Carolina Department of Social Services has established a Transportation Resource Office which has been instrumental in developing information and policy to support welfare-to-work transportation, statewide transportation coordination, and other transportation issues. Using a National Governors Association grant, this office developed *The State of South Carolina Final Progress Report and Work Plan on Transportation Coordination for Welfare Reform*. Among other items, this document includes a county-by-county directory of qualified transportation providers; forms and

procedures for Family Independence Program transportation service authorization and payment, and a county-by-county presentation of best practices in welfare-to-work transportation (including a discussion of Flex Route service in Kershaw County). The Resource Office director has served on the state Steering Committee and has strongly supported transportation coordination in general and the Flex Route approach in particular.

## Vanpooling

The Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor for Lee County participated in the planning process for the Lee County Connection. He strongly supported this transportation approach, and saw a need for inter-county employment transportation to serve several major employers in adjacent Sumter County. Determining that vanpools would meet some of the transportation needs of his Vocational Rehabilitation clients, the counselor met with Santee Wateree RTA and a major employer. The RTA agreed to furnish the van to support employment trips from Bishopville, in Lee County, to this employer's plant on a demonstration basis, providing that sufficient ridership be developed to support the van (about 12 employees). Vocational Rehabilitation had four of the needed participants; the others would have to come from other employees via bulletin board notices and word of mouth at the industrial plant. Initial results indicate that about 10 persons are now paying to ride the van (\$2 each way to work), so that this vanpool appears to be on the road to self-sufficiency. The next step is to train one of the riders to drive the van in order to reduce transportation costs. Other industrial employers are being identified and asked to participate in vanpools.

**Aggressive local leadership helped move the project forward quickly and efficiently.**

## Lessons Learned

Implementation of the Flex Route system in Kershaw and Lee Counties has shown that, when local conditions favor interagency participation and when all parties participate, system development can be expedited and efficient. In Kershaw, aggressive local leadership spearheaded by the Director of the Department of Social Services and the Director of the Board of Disabilities and Special Needs took actions that seemed to say: "We will do this in the best interest of our clients and our community and we will accept no excuses." The Santee Wateree planner's GIS mapping and technology enabled agency staff to plan the system from the ground up in only six months. (Drawing on the Flex Route experience of the Florida counties further gave the planners feeling that this was feasible and the right thing to do.) So strong were the commitments and interest that the DSS Director helped the RTA to sell the system to adjacent Lee County.

The Flex Route has limited potential for contributing to welfare-to-work

transportation in Kershaw County because there are so few employable Family Independence Program participants (only about 17 in 1998). The potential is higher in Lee County, however, where there are far more participants and a greater incidence of poverty, low income, and dependence on out-of-county jobs. The new Connection to Columbia will provide even more opportunities particularly if and when this connection expands from three to five days per week.

## **Notes**

- <sup>1</sup> In the summer of 1999, DSS moved its facility to a location near the terminal point of this new transportation service.

# Case Study:

## Transit Authority of River City

The Transit Authority of River City (TARC), in Louisville, Kentucky, has been involved in numerous efforts to serve low income residents by providing public transportation resources in support of community goals. These efforts preceded the national welfare reform initiative and were tied to local programs to aid families at risk and support economic development. This case study focuses on two specific programs:

- **Nia Travel and Employment Center**, in the West Louisville empowerment zone, which is a one-stop center with employment resources, small businesses, and transit services
- **Nia Night Owl Service**, which provides door-to-door service between 11:00 p.m. and 5:00 a.m. in the empowerment zone

Both programs build on the concept of coordination among organizations. The Nia Center puts related agencies under one roof, offering “one-stop shopping.” After obtaining a job through Career Resources, for example, an individual can walk across the hall and get information on TARC bus service or apply for the Nia Night Owl.

## Service Area

TARC was formed in 1974 and is the primary provider of transit services in the five county Kentuckiana region: Jefferson (including the City of Louisville), Bullitt and Oldham counties in Kentucky and Floyd and Clark counties in Southern Indiana. TARC serves approximately 15 million people a year on 67 routes. Its network includes express and local service to suburban job locations, and special routes in cooperation with United Parcel Service to serve its hub in Louisville and its Metropolitan College Program.

## Transportation Barriers to Employment

TARC has committed itself to collaborating with the community to eliminate the lack of transportation as a barrier to accessing job opportunities in the metropolitan area. As is the case in many urban areas, there is a mismatch

*You should use the Nia Center . . .*

- If you have a business or are preparing to start a business
- If your business has outgrown your garage, basement, or spare room
- If you are in need of some professional business advice
- If you are an employer wanting to identify potential employees
- If you are a job seeker looking for employment
- If you are an Empowerment Zone resident interested in training for a career path
- If you work late and typical bus services do not meet your needs
- If you are dreaming of owning your own home

between workers and employment opportunities. The Louisville metropolitan area has decentralized to the point that traditional transit approaches are limited in their ability to meet all needs. This is extremely evident in most of the outlying portions of the region where service hours on regular routes have been reduced, due to low density resulting in low ridership. These areas were prime candidates for non-traditional approaches to the delivery of transit services such as the Nia Night Owl. In addition, the better paying jobs tend to be on the night shift. Often the shift differential will be enough to enable the person to become self-sufficient, but individuals may not be able to take these jobs because bus schedules do not match work hours.

## **Nia Travel and Jobs Center**

The Nia Travel and Jobs Center is a one stop facility in the West Louisville Empowerment Zone that provides public transportation connections, job training, small business development, and access to capital funding. The word Nia means “purpose” and is one of the seven principles of Kwanzaa. The purpose and mission of the Nia Center is:

- To provide a seamless one-stop environment that builds on the strengths of area residents
- To enhance business growth and development
- To cultivate a marketable workforce
- To improve mobility through increased access to public transportation

The center is open from early morning until 12:30 a.m. Some of the current tenants include small business and employment resource centers, the Louisville Business Resource Center (U.S. Small Business Administration), Service Corps of Retired Executives, TARC, and a local recruitment office for United Parcel Service.

TARC operates a customer service center in the Nia Center, which provides pass and ticket sales, transit routing and service information. The Nia Night Owl service also is managed from this location. The facility includes a small transit center and an interior waiting lounge. Seven fixed routes serve the Nia Center, including two of TARC's most heavily traveled fixed bus routes, two other fixed-routes, two circulator routes, one express route, and Nia Night Owl buses that transport pre-registered passengers directly from their homes to their places of employment. Approximately 20 percent of TARC's ridership uses the routes that serve the Nia Center.

Passengers also can find TARC bus schedules and other informational materials at the customer service center, purchase monthly passes and discount tickets, and obtain identification cards. A TARC Coordinator and Transit Center Specialist are on site and serve as a liaison to other tenant partners and the community, including employers and government agencies serving the surrounding area.

## Nia Night Owl Service

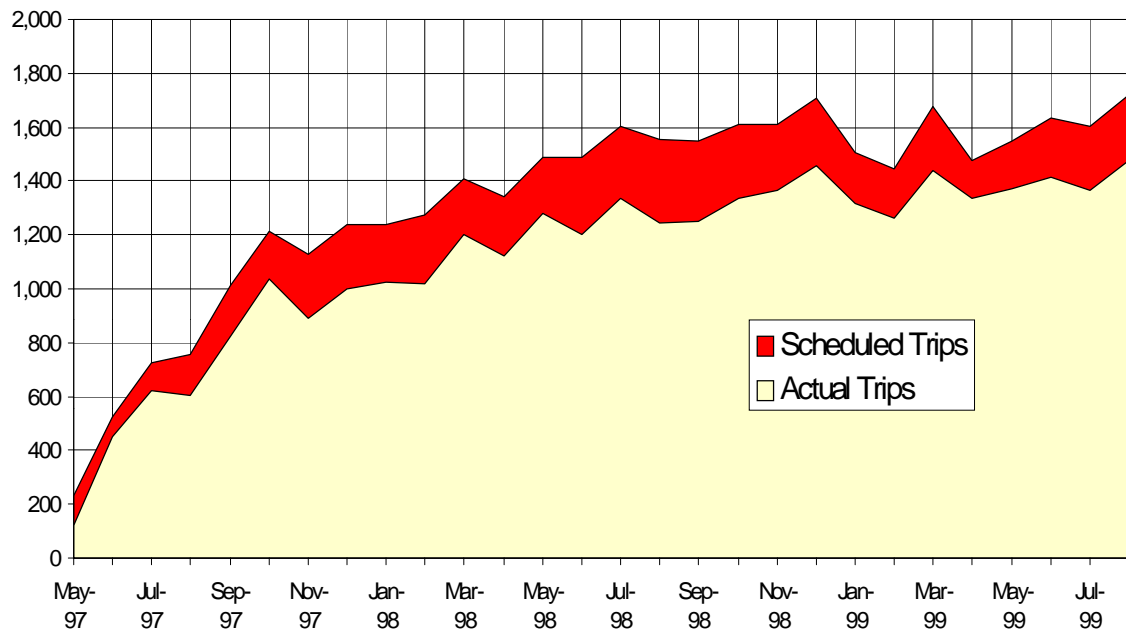
TARC began operating the Nia Night Owl service in May 1997. The Night Owl provides door-to-door service for work trips for people living or working within the boundaries of the empowerment zone in West Louisville who cannot rely on a TARC bus. Service operates seven days a week from 11:00 p.m. to 5:00 a.m., when few or no other TARC buses are on the street. The Nia Night Owl is intended for second- and third-shift workers, many of whom can use the bus for only part of their trip. The fare is \$1.50 per trip.



Trips on the Nia Night Owl are available through application. To date, virtually all trips have been accommodated if they met the parameters of the program. The coordinator has the ability to add vehicles to the service when capacity warrants. Once the trip is entered on the schedule, TARC treats it like a standing order. Passengers call the TARC staff at the Nia Center only when their work schedule changes. Otherwise, the trip is operated as scheduled.



## Nia Night Owl Scheduled and Actual Trips, 1997-1999



Source: Transit Authority of River City

Night Owl ridership turns over frequently and has been described as a “fluid” population. Some change their schedules from week to week. Others change job locations and may no longer need the program (e.g., the new location is served by a TARC bus). TARC staff indicates there are about five new riders each week. Between three and four riders drop out of the program each week, primarily because of a change in job or access to an automobile.

The Nia Night Owl does not serve those with jobs that start earlier than the prescribed hours, those who lack convenient home to child care to work connections, or those living outside the boundaries of the Louisville Empowerment Zone. TARC is expanding the program with an FTA Access to Jobs Grant, which was awarded in May 1999. Beginning in September 1999, TARC began accommodating requests for origins and destinations throughout Jefferson County. An expansion of service hours is planned next year.

Drivers bid on the Nia Night Owl like any other route in the TARC system. It has attracted the system’s most senior drivers, and no regular or substitute driver has less than 20 years of experience. The drivers in the program like

the work hours, as well as the fact that the run is an “eight-hour straight.” They enjoy the interaction with the passengers, the satisfaction of knowing how much their services are appreciated, the lack of traffic, and the independence they have operating a demand-responsive service.

When the Night Owl service was planned, TARC needed to extend dispatcher shifts to provide coverage during the additional service hours. It also now keeps the operating division open at all hours. This expansion also was required for TARC service to UPS during these hours. The dispatchers are available to assist drivers and take calls regarding cancellations. The service policy specifies 24-hour advance notice for cancellations, though emergency cancellations will be accepted by midnight prior to service pick-up. Since the schedule is fixed each night, there is little flexibility to respond to riders who finish early or have to stay late. The operating policy in effect is that the driver will wait up to five minutes for a passenger. The vehicle is considered “on-time” using a 15-minute window around the scheduled pick-up time. Staff and riders indicate on-time performance has not been a problem.

## Ridership

TARC developed the Nia Night Owl to serve transit dependent individuals who had no alternatives during the overnight period when buses were not running. Today, nearly 100 individuals use Nia Night Owl service nightly to get to and from work. For the twelve months ending August 1998, TARC provided 16,395 trips on the Nia Night Owl. As the figure shows, monthly ridership has increased steadily, though the rate of increase has slowed. This reflects the constant turnover of the ridership base.

Not counting the first month of operation, the passenger productivity levels for the Nia Night Owl have ranged from 1.3 to 2.5 passengers per hour and 0.12 to 0.20 passengers per mile. More recent performance has been around 2 passengers per hour and 0.18 passengers per mile. With the expansion to all of Jefferson County, this was expected to drop somewhat.

## Operating Expenses

TARC incurs on-going costs for both its role as a tenant at the Nia Center and its operation of the Nia Night Owl service.

- **Staff for Nia Center.** A total of \$99,180 is incurred per year for the salaries and fringes for two positions.
- **Nia Center Operating Expenses.** TARC pays \$18,972 per year for its share of the operating expenses of the center. This covers services such as utilities, maintenance, and security.

- **Nia Night Owl Operations.** TARC's marginal cost per hour is \$43. In the twelve months ending August 1999, TARC operated 8,643 hours of service on the Nia Night Owl. Thus, it incurred operating expenses of \$371,649.
- **Operational Supervision.** TARC had to create a new night supervisor position to cover Nia Night Owl road operations and UPS contract service, as well as early fixed-route service. The Night Owl is estimated to be approximately 40 percent of these expenses, or \$22,496.

Night Owl expenses total \$394,145, or less than one percent of TARC's annual operating expenses. Operating costs were \$24.04 per actual trip and \$20.65 per scheduled trip. This is slightly higher than TARC's ADA paratransit service, which is contracted out to a private firm. However, TARC chose to operate the Nia Night Owl service in-house because it afforded more control over this experimental program and because it would help send a consistent message to customers.

Although the Nia Night Owl serves a relatively small number of people, it makes a major contribution to the lives of those it serves. The Nia Night Owl enables individuals without transportation options to take jobs during the more lucrative night and swing shifts, in locations throughout the region. Moreover, it provides this critical service while incurring only incremental costs to the transit system.

## Project Planning

The Nia Travel and Jobs Center resulted from ten years of community-based planning to address the needs of the Louisville's poorest residents. TARC was one of the many agencies and individuals that participated in the effort to obtain an empowerment zone designation and associated funding in Louisville. Jobs and transportation, supported by training and child care, were identified as critical in this process. Through this grass-roots approach, the City of Louisville identified the need for a single entity to respond to these concerns. The concept of bringing multiple agencies into a single physical location, serving as a one-stop employment and economic development campus within the target community, grew out of this project planning.

Despite its extensive planning and foresight, Louisville's application was not successful in the empowerment zone competition. Locally, a decision was made to continue referring to the empowerment zone, even without formal designation. Soon thereafter, the Federal Transit Administration announced its Livable Communities Initiative (LCI). The City of Louisville and TARC, in particular, were well-positioned to pursue this funding and

## Nia Night Owl

### Operating Statistics, 1997-1999

Month	Riders	Revenue	Hours	Miles	Pax/Hour	Pax/Mile
May-97	125	\$ 188	225	2,206	0.56	0.06
Jun-97	451	\$ 677	345	3,912	1.31	0.12
Jul-97	621	\$ 932	363	4,643	1.71	0.13
Aug-97	602	\$ 902	433	4,605	1.39	0.13
Sep-97	823	\$ 1,235	519	5,804	1.59	0.14
Oct-97	1,037	\$ 1,556	534	6,349	1.94	0.16
Nov-97	889	\$ 1,334	513	5,630	1.73	0.16
Dec-97	998	\$ 1,497	534	5,377	1.87	0.19
Jan-98	1,025	\$ 1,535	521	5,494	1.97	0.19
Feb-98	1,021	\$ 1,532	484	5,048	2.11	0.20
Mar-98	1,202	\$ 1,803	534	6,112	2.25	0.20
Apr-98	1,125	\$ 1,688	526	6,238	2.14	0.18
May-98	1,279	\$ 1,919	506	6,654	2.53	0.19
Jun-98	1,204	\$ 1,806	526	7,368	2.29	0.16
Jul-98	1,338	\$ 1,961	731	8,056	1.83	0.17
Aug-98	1,245	\$ 1,865	697	8,317	1.79	0.15
Sep-98	1,248	\$ 1,872	681	7,704	1.83	0.16
Oct-98	1,338	\$ 2,007	702	8,200	1.91	0.16
Nov-98	1,365	\$ 2,048	676	7,549	2.02	0.18
Dec-98	1,455	\$ 2,183	718	7,526	2.03	0.19
Jan-99	1,319	\$ 1,961	676	7,964	1.95	0.17
Feb-99	1,265	\$ 1,844	844	7,772	1.50	0.16
Mar-99	1,442	\$ 2,162	723	8,581	1.99	0.17
Apr-99	1,334	\$ 1,983	694	7,670	1.92	0.17
May-99	1,373	\$ 2,031	684	7,701	2.01	0.18
Jun-99	1,414	\$ 2,070	702	8,140	2.01	0.17
Jul-99	1,367	\$ 2,051	788	7,681	1.73	0.18
Aug-99	1,475	\$ 2,213	755	7,966	1.95	0.19

*Source: Transit Authority of River City*

received a \$3 million grant. This allowed TARC to purchase and restore an building in the heart of West Louisville into the Nia Center. Also as part of the grant, TARC purchased 10 shuttle vehicles to provide neighborhood access to the center and to link the center to outlying employment areas through the Nia Night Owl service.

TARC staff planned the Nia Night Owl service. The need for the service became apparent as part of TARC's participation in community activities, both on-going and specific to the Nia Center. Staff received many requests for service to outlying growth areas, where most of the entry-level jobs were, and for service for later shifts, which paid higher wages. The final catalyst for the service came when staff heard about a rider who could not leave his job when he finished around 3:00 a.m. because there was no bus service. He would sleep at the work site for a few hours until the buses resumed operation, then travel home and continue his sleep. After hearing this, the TARC Executive Director responded, "everyone is entitled to a one-pillow sleep."

████████████████████  
"Everyone is entitled to a  
one-pillow sleep."  
████████████████████

Introducing the Nia Night Owl service was one way for TARC to begin to reinstate late-night service for transit dependent passengers. Like many transit systems, TARC was forced to cut service to meet budget constraints in 1994. The agency followed traditional service planning methodologies and eliminated service on trips and routes with the lowest productivity levels. Many of the cuts were to late night or weekend service. Though these trips carried only a few passengers, they were passengers without transportation alternatives. So while only a relatively small number of individuals was inconvenienced, the impacts on each individual were large. With the Nia Night Owl, access was reintroduced in a customized door-to-door manner, providing a more secure ride for its transit-dependent riders.

TARC is expanding the Nia Night Owl, with funds made available from an FTA Access to Jobs and Reverse Commute Job. Welfare-to-work grant funds received by the local Workforce Investment Board from the U. S. Department of Labor will support this program as well, providing a portion of the local matching funds. The service area was expanded in September 1999 and an expansion of service hours is planned.

## Funding Sources

The FTA Livable Communities Initiative grant provided the start-up capital funding for the Nia Center and Nia Night Owl Service. The \$3 million project received \$2.4 million in federal funding, which was used to acquire the building that became the Nia Center. The grant also included \$1.4 million to reconstruct the building and to build the transit center. The grant also provided \$610,000 to purchase ten small vehicles.

TARC has paid for the operating costs for the Nia Night Owl service through its operating budget and federal Congestion Management and Air Quality (CMAQ) funds. TARC's local funding comes from an increase in the local payroll tax of one-fifth of one percent.

TARC is expanding service using an FTA Access to Jobs Grant. The project totals \$2,065,876, of which the federal funding covers half. Matching funds are being provided from several sources, including \$300,000 from the Workforce Investment Board as part of its grant for infrastructure improvement (not specifically welfare to work) from the U. S. Department of Labor.

## Program Evaluation

Though all involved judge the Nia Center and Nia Night Owl service to be successful, there have been no formal evaluations of these programs. Most of the written materials about the programs have been prepared primarily as promotional pieces or for grants seeking additional funds.

The Nia Center provides a wide range of services under one roof. While many welfare-related programs have created one-stop centers, they rarely include transit staff who can provide one-on-one trip planning information. This provides a far higher level of service than installing a schedule rack and expecting potential workers to plan their own itineraries.

Individual tenants are pleased with their role in the center and their individual successes. The tenants would like to see more people use the center and to have more of the space occupied. To this end, there may be a need for further publicity and outreach. The Nia Center was set up as a partnership, with all participants having equal roles. Nia partners attend monthly meetings; TARC's on-site coordinator attends on behalf of the transit authority. In retrospect, some participants believe that a lead organization or individual should have been charged with the overall management and promotion of the Center. Presently, each program is promoted separately to the extent the individual program can. Most advertising is word of mouth. The relationship among the tenants is described as casual and neighborly.

There is no central point of intake at the Nia Center. Instead of a receptionist, there is a directory of tenants. Since the TARC customer service counter and offices are closest to the center of the first floor, TARC staff often intercepts and assists visitors who are unfamiliar with the building.



Prior to expanding the service area in September 1999 to all of Jefferson County, the Nia Night Owl was able to accommodate all trip requests that met the service parameters (within the operating hours with either origin or destination in the empowerment zone). Staff anticipates a need to establish trip by trip eligibility in the future to ensure that the service is carrying only trips that cannot be made on transit.

As noted earlier, the Nia Night Owl service has a profound impact on the lives of those who use it. Jobs in outlying areas on shifts with the highest differentials now are available. For someone living in the empowerment zone, virtually any job in the TARC service area now is a possibility. With the expansion of the program, other City of Louisville and Jefferson County residents will have the same opportunities. The availability of reliable transportation also enhances job retention. Ironically, the greater job retention may lead to fewer Night Owl riders. As riders achieve financial self-sufficiency, many purchase an automobile. Others may move on to better paying jobs in locations or hours that are served by TARC fixed-route buses, again obviating the need for the Night Owl service.

████████████████████  
**The grass-roots planning approach helped build a sense of ownership among community participants.**  
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TARC has identified both short-term and long-term constraints to the Night Owl operation. In the short term, the authority has limited flexibility to respond to unplanned changes in work schedule (e.g., finishing early or staying later). As a prescheduled standing order, the Night Owl has limited ability to change a pick-up time once the schedule has been established. Over the long term, the agency needs to identify funding sources to sustain the operation. In the early stages, TARC relied on the FTA Livable Communities

Initiatives grant for the capital funds for both the center and the small vehicles. Operating support for the Nia Night Owl has come from CMAQ funds. Expansion of the program is supported with an FTA Access to Jobs grant. The WIB's US DOL Welfare to Work grant is providing some of the matching funds.

The Nia Night Owl service costs TARC less than one percent of its operating budget to provide. The current program demonstrates performance that is typical among demand-responsive services, particularly those serving scattered sites during off-hours. The Night Owl carries about 2 passengers an hour and is operated at TARC's marginal operating cost of \$43 per hour. With the additional costs for operations supervision, the Night Owl costs approximately \$24 for each passenger trip completed.

## **Lessons Learned**

Participants view the programs as successful, primarily because they were conceived by the community for the community. This grass roots style was very appealing and created a sense of ownership by all involved. While the emphasis has been on coordination among the many participating entities, some say that communication was more essential than cooperation. One key to success was getting people at the table who were interested in helping, not just those who were at the table just to be there. At the same time, TARC cites the critical need to implement new programs thoughtfully and to make sure that they are sustainable.

TARC strives to be an active participant in many community activities. Through their extensive networking, the staff members are able to hear and respond to comments regarding the lack of transportation. In some cases, erroneous statements have to be corrected. For example, transportation often is cited as the reason a company has difficulty attracting employees. Sometimes, transportation is available but the jobs may not be attractive in terms of wages, hours, and responsibilities. It is easier for these employers to use transportation as a scapegoat rather than assessing their own characteristics and competitiveness. By being present in the community, TARC has the opportunity to correct and counteract these misconceptions.



