Mobility Management
State of the Practice
2013

Transportation Reform Demonstration Project:
Creating jobs and economic development in Michigan by removing barriers to coordinated federal, state and local public transportation investment and management
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Completed in collaboration with the Michigan Department of Transportation, Michigan Economic Development Corporation and Michigan State Housing Development Authority.

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STATE OF THE PRACTICE FOR MOBILITY MANAGEMENT

The purpose of this document is to provide an overview of the state of the practice in mobility management. This document will be incorporated into project reports identifying framework strategies for mobility management within or near existing funding levels for the communities of Marquette, Traverse City, and Lansing.

These communities have chosen to develop regional mobility management strategies under the Michigan Sustainable Communities Smart Growth America Demonstration Project. These strategies will be designed to optimize organizational structure and service delivery for public transportation services and serve as a model for statewide service delivery.

This document will be used in the first stage of the planning process as an assessment tool for helping to determine a strategic focus for each community. Community representatives and the consultants will use this document as a framework for assessing where each community’s transportation system is strong and what elements hold the greatest potential for improvement.

A Cross-Cutting Approach

“We cannot truly evaluate the value of community and public transportation if we never take into account the positive economic outcomes it engenders. Looking beyond mere ridership statistics, this value is rooted in data that is far more challenging to collect and interpret than traditional transit measurements.”

– Scott Bogren, in “Reframing Value – Transit’s New Playbook”

Mobility management strategies offer an effective approach to optimizing the value of transportation services. Mobility management encompasses and synthesizes a broad range of complementary strategies that include:

- Qualified, professional mobility management staff who coordinate public transportation and human service transportation
- Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) Technology designed and implemented using systems engineering
- Effective marketing and convenient service
- Creative, broad-based funding strategies including public-private partnerships, and strong community support and local funding that leverages federal and state funding
- Engagement in transportation demand management and local and regional planning efforts to ensure sustainable, transit oriented community design and growth patterns
Safety Net vs. Community Service

Community transportation systems can be broadly classified as “safety net” services or “community services”. A safety net service primarily serves populations with no other transportation options including low income, people with disabilities and seniors. Mobility management is one tool to help build a system that serves a much broader cross section of the community while still providing a safety net function.

The ideal community transportation system not only meets basic social service needs, but also provides significant economic benefit to employers, employees and commercial areas. Additionally, by maximizing ridership it should achieve meaningful reductions in traffic congestion and carbon footprint. To do this, services must:

1. Be affordable.
2. Have routes and schedules that are designed using good data and stakeholder input to effectively serve a broad range of community needs.

Transportation as an Essential Element of Livable Communities

The federal Sustainable Communities Partnership describes the role of transportation as an integral element of a “livable” community. The Sustainable Communities Partnership describes a livable community as one that:

- Provides more transportation choices that are safe, reliable, and economical
- Promotes equitable, affordable housing options
- Enhances economic competitiveness
- Supports and targets funding toward existing communities
- Values communities and neighborhoods

USDOT recommends the following to improve the transportation in a livable community:

- **Provide more transportation choices** to decrease household transportation costs, reduce our dependence on oil, improve air quality and promote public health.
- **Expand location- and energy-efficient housing choices** for people of all ages, incomes, races and ethnicities to increase mobility and lower the combined cost of housing and transportation.
- **Improve economic competitiveness of neighborhoods** by giving people reliable access to employment centers, educational opportunities, services and other basic needs.
- **Target federal funding toward existing communities** – through transit-oriented development and land recycling – to revitalize communities, reduce public works costs, and safeguard rural landscapes.
- **Align federal policies and funding** to remove barriers to collaboration, leverage funding and increase the effectiveness of programs to plan for future growth.
- **Enhance the unique characteristics of all communities** by investing in healthy, safe and walkable neighborhoods, whether rural, urban or suburban.
COORDINATION & MOBILITY MANAGEMENT

Effective coordination through professional mobility management is the core focus for communities across the country that are leading the state of the practice and succeeding in making public transportation an essential element of their quality of life and their economy. A quality these communities all share is that the lead governmental and non-profit agencies have organizational cultures that value cooperation and collaboration and are willing to invest in coordination because they have a shared vision as well as a practical understanding of the benefits that can be achieved.

One of the best summaries of coordination opportunities and benefits we have seen is a fact sheet recently published by the Kansas University Transportation Center (Weaver & Vander Broek, 2011), in which the authors state, “Coordination is about managing resources and sharing decision-making among organizations working together for a common goal. It encompasses management, resources, cost-effectiveness, broad perspectives, multiple stakeholders, cooperation and action.”

The Challenge and Complexity of Coordination

Providing a coordinated, efficient transportation system requires great expertise in navigating through the complicated network of federal transportation funding sources and rules, and applying this understanding to the web of community partners and needs. The spaghetti diagram in Figure 1 shows the 62 federal programs identified by the Congressional Office of Management and Budget in 2004 that have transportation funding programs for the human service portion of community transportation. Layered onto the federal funding sources are the state and local governments, the transportation providers, and the supporting social services.

The person looking for a ride and the organizations offering rides can get lost in the complexity of navigating this network of often overlapping programs. In communities with poor coordination and a lack of expertise and the staffing resources to tackle this challenge, the result is typically low funding levels and missed opportunities, with duplicated transportation services in some areas and no service and limited hours in other areas.
Figure 1  Different Agencies Funding Passenger Transportation

Source: United We Ride
Muskegon County, MI provides a good example of the complexity illustrated in Figure 1. In Muskegon, we identified approximately 30 organizations that provide transportation, and 19 that fund or represent people who need transportation. Many of the programs identified in the bubbles on the left side of the diagram, connected to federal Departments of Health and Human Services, Labor, Education, and Transportation, are contributing funds to each of these operators, either through direct grants, contracts, or purchase of rides.

Coordination Models

There are many successful community or coordinated transportation systems serving rural, small urban, and metropolitan regions around the country. These systems can be categorized into three, generalized model types:

- **Lead agency model** - In the lead agency model, one local organization is responsible for coordinating transportation services and activities within a defined geographic area. The lead agency may be a private or non-profit organization, social service or related agency, or public entity.

- **Brokerage model** - In the brokerage approach, one entity acts as an agent to arrange rides for persons needing transportation among a group of operators that “bid” to provide services. Both the broker and transportation provider receive fees for services, which are rolled into transportation charges per capita, per trip or some unit, and/or per mile. Such charges are paid by individuals or insurance companies directly or via health and social service funding.

- **Administrative agency** - In the last type, an administrative agency is a public agency or entity (often a transit authority) that has responsibility to coordinate social service or specialized transportation, in addition to its role in providing public transportation.

Mobility Management

Mobility management is the state of the practice for planning and implementing effective coordination. The goal underlying the mobility management concept is to achieve a paradigm shift under which transportation providers are not measuring their performance based on the cost efficiency of how they operate their fleet, but instead measuring their return on investment in terms of moving people and meeting community needs. Simply providing transportation capacity is only the first step. What really matters is how that capacity is being used.

To effectively achieve the goals of maximizing transportation options and service coverage while also being efficient and cost-effective, a mobility management system must successfully serve two key functions:

1. A mobility manager must plan and coordinate region-wide and long term, by building working partnerships, coalitions and business relationships between multiple transportation service providers, social service providers and other stakeholders.

2. On the short term, day-to-day level of serving individual riders and maximizing ridership, they must be effective at creating and managing systems and communication strategies that help people find rides and get where they need to go.
Staffing for Mobility Management

It is important for decision-makers not to underestimate the qualifications, commitment and time needed to manage public transit in communities of any size. Mobility management can fall short for one or both of the following two reasons:

1. Qualified staff are hired but have so many responsibilities for operating the local transit system that they have no time for mobility management tasks such as pursuing new funding sources, or building and coordinating coalitions and partnerships.

2. Low salary and low expectations for professional skills result in hiring unqualified personnel.

Mobility management functions can be assigned to existing staff, or a new position can be completed. In this project we will loosely use the term “mobility manager” to apply to anyone carrying out some or all of the mobility management functions, regardless of job title.

Mobility Management Functions

The full range of mobility management services may include customer relations, marketing, planning, land use development, system integration, finance, administration, legal, compliance, human resources, multimodal operations, information technology, engineering, construction, and varied non-operating functions (Crain & Associates, Inc., et. al., 1997). The challenge is to establish a network of transportation providers that is properly funded and can meet the entire community’s needs within these constraints.

Although conceptually simple, working through the coordination process and bringing community partners together can be challenging, because most partners focus on their one business or service and do not understand what transportation coordination means or its potential benefits and cost savings.

Appendix B lists functions identified as the responsibilities of a Mobility Management Center in the Mobility Management Plan for a Remote California Community (Ballard, L., et. al., 2007).

The most up-to-date information on Mobility Management is available at the Partnership for Mobility Management website¹.

Local Level Coordination

In many cases, there are opportunities to share resources. This is not to say that public transportation can provide all social service transportation in a community, or that all publicly funded social service vehicles should be open to the public. They should not as there are some circumstances that warrant segmented transportation.

“There has been a misperception that categorical funding “does not permit” the sharing of resources among client groups of different types. Both the U.S. Departments of Transportation (DOT) and Health and Human Services (HHS) have issued instructions that are clear on such issues: as long as there is excess capacity and service is not being denied to the primary client group, it is indeed possible to use vehicles and other resources to serve a variety of client types, and it is

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possible to have clients from different sponsoring agencies riding on vehicles at the same time.” (Burkhardt 2004)

Transportation system and social service staff often do not have the time or training to “unravel the spaghetti” related to non-FTA transportation expenditures by funding sources such as Community Development Block Grants (CDBG), Medicaid, and Michigan Works!/Department of Labor.

Social service partners are often in the best position to collect data about unmet needs that can be used for service planning and coordination

**Coordination Between Communities and Modes**

Besides coordinating locally, a complete mobility management approach considers coordination with intercity buses, trains, and airports. Bus stops and schedules are often not coordinated or connected, and often can be infeasible to coordinate. Nevertheless, communities should investigate opportunities including an attractive, well-located transfer station that serves both in-town and intercity buses with the potential connection with taxis and trains.

**State Level Coordination**

Regional and state-level partnerships and mobility management systems can help provide valuable assistance to communities and help ensure that resources are allocated where they are needed most and will have the greatest impact. A good example of successful, progressive policies at the state level is in Idaho where the statewide Community Transportation Association and the state’s multi-tiered mobility management system have both demonstrated significant success in maximizing service and efficiency through strategic planning and effective allocation of available federal funding. This success is partially the result of the state’s decision to invest in and strengthen the Community Transportation Association of Idaho (CTAI).

**THE ROLE OF TECHNOLOGY**

Technology plays a critical role in effective customer communications, and internal management of daily operations as well as longer term planning decisions. It is tightly related to operations, performance monitoring, marketing, social media strategy, and good information design. The same technological capabilities that make it possible to provide real time bus tracking, automated stop announcements and other accurate, user-friendly information to the public are also necessary for critical management challenges such as assessing on-time performance, analyzing ridership and deciding how to allocate resources when increasing or cutting service. Additionally, technology is essential for effective mobility management, helping professional staff coordinate the services of multiple providers and guide customers who are trying to find a ride.

**Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS)**

An intelligent transportation system (ITS) is the combination of technologies used to achieve these functions. Different software, hardware, spreadsheets, and back-end databases can be used as long as they are coordinated. Transit ITS will serve these needs most effectively if it is designed to integrate accurate data that includes a description of services, routes, and timetables, as well as real time vehicle location. The necessary technology functions can be grouped into:

- Rider information
- A transit management system
- Automatic vehicle location
Figure 2 lists common ITS user services for fixed route service technology as well as demand response management software.

**Figure 2**  
**ITS User Services for Transit and Coordination**

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**Systems Engineering**

USDOT requires transit systems to use a systems engineering process when using FTA funding to design and implement transit management system technology. Simply stated, systems engineering is an integrated planning, design and implementation process that involves users and ITS developers in a team effort with the goal of providing a quality product that meets all user and technical needs. The process ensures the collaboration, iteration, and feedback that most ITS projects typically require between the design and implementation phases. It should be possible to scale and tailor the process to apply to projects of all sizes and complexity.

This is an important, but widely neglected policy. Transit operators commonly invest FTA funding in a wide range of ITS applications. However, a study of costs for 44 projects found a 50% average cost overrun on projects without systems engineering, and a clear trend towards better cost performance with systems engineering (FHWA-California Division and Caltrans, 2009). Systems engineering reduces the risk of schedule and cost overruns and increases the likelihood that the implementation will meet the user's needs. Other benefits include:

- Improved stakeholder participation
- More adaptable, resilient systems
- Verified functionality and fewer defects
- Higher level of reuse from one project to the next, and
- Better documentation.

In short, this is not only a regulatory requirement, it is good practice.
MARKETING, COMMUNICATION AND CONVENIENCE

While coordination should be a community’s top priority, an important secondary focus should be investing in convenience and marketing. We have seen many local systems fall far short of their potential because the public has a low level of awareness of the services that are available. Failure to provide a positive experience and to market services can have a substantial impact on ridership and can significantly limit the effectiveness of the FTA funding being invested in other aspects of the system.

Convenience and user-friendliness includes on-time performance; clean, well-maintained buses; well-planned routes; well-signed and maintained bus stops with shelters and ADA access; hard copy and web-based route maps and schedules that are easy to use; and a website with mobile interface that is easy to navigate and includes an interactive trip planner and real-time bus arrival information. For systems that charge fares, it is important for riders to be able to easily find information about purchasing bus passes and to be able to conveniently buy passes. Personnel who interact with the public in person or over the phone should be friendly, knowledgeable and trained to work with people with disabilities.

Promotion includes effective branding, visibility and attractiveness of buses and facilities, an inviting website, and paid advertising as well as taking advantage of opportunities for positive media coverage. We typically recommend working with an experienced and successful local marketing firm to develop a comprehensive, ongoing branding and promotional campaign. For successful implementation, we recommend budgeting an ongoing investment equal to a relatively small percentage of operating expenses, with a substantial initial one-time investment several times higher to develop and launch the campaign.

A transit system can be viewed as a chain of interdependent components that can fail at the weakest link. Promotion and convenience are often two of the weakest links. For example, we have worked with a community that has great need for transit services but has been experiencing declining ridership for years. This transit system’s website is not only extremely limited, poorly designed and hard to use, but is also buried deep within the County website so that it is very hard for a potential rider to even find the site in the first place. In the same community, in spite of high ridership by elderly and disabled populations and frequent severe weather, there are very few benches or shelters at bus stops and in many cases the benches and shelters that do exist are not ADA accessible. It is also difficult to buy bus passes in this community or to find information about different types of passes.

Website

A transit system’s website is one of its most important communication tools. Many riders and potential riders will look for information on the website before they look at a printed schedule. Good website design for transit follows a few simple principles. The information that is most important to the rider should be “above the fold” at the top of the page. Ideally, a website should include the following elements:

This can include a trip planner, a map of services, time tables, real-time bus location, and any special announcements about route or schedule changes.

- Route Maps – It should be easy for viewers to find and view route maps.
- **Schedules** – Good design is essential to make it easy to customers to understand timetables.
- **Trip Planner** – A trip planner powered by Google Transit should be a prominent feature on the home page, especially because many people have a hard time understanding even the best designed schedules and timetables.
- **Real Time Bus Tracking**
- **Mobile Interface**
- **ADA Compliant Design**
- **Information and Links to Other Transportation Providers** – Information about social service transportation, ridesharing, find-a-ride services, etc.

**FUNDING**

Transit system revenue comes from a combination of federal, state, and local funding sources plus farebox revenue. Operations funding for the Muskegon Area Transit System (MATS) is fairly typical for small and medium sized systems:

**Figure 3**  Approximate Distribution of Revenue for Muskegon Area Transit System

![Pie chart showing revenue distribution]

When adequate funds are available, the FTA can cover 50% of the net operating cost of small urbanized transit systems and 80% of the cost of maintenance, administration, and capital purchases. For all FTA programs, the balance of funds for operations or capital must come from “local” sources, which includes state, county or city, business, and community funds as well as non-transportation federal sources.

Before applying formulas for reimbursement, farebox revenue is subtracted to obtain a net operating deficit. Farebox revenue includes bus passes purchased with federal funds from jobs programs, Medicare, and services for people with disabilities. Most of these bus passes are purchased in bulk by social service agencies and non-profit organizations. Contracted services using this funding are not included in farebox revenue, but are rather considered “local” funding.

It appears that, at the very least, coordination could result in the “claiming” of “local funds” that would allow for utilization of FTA funds that cannot currently be matched FTA funding.
Federal Funding Through FTA

The Federal Transit Administration’s (FTA) 5307 Urbanized Area Formula Program for communities with population more than 50,000 and 5311 Formula Grants for Other than Urbanized Areas are the principal funding source for communities with fewer than 250,000 people.

MAP-21 (Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act) became effective on Oct. 1, 2012 and will remain in effect until Sept. 30, 2014. MAP 21 consolidates the Federal Transit Administration’s 49 U.S.C. 5316 (Job Access and Reverse Commute), and 5317 (New Freedom) grant programs into 5307, 5310 (Transportation for Elderly Persons and Persons with Disabilities), and 5311, but continues coordination requirements.

“Under MAP-21, mobility management is considered a capital expense, eligible for 80 percent federal funding. The definition of mobility management is unchanged from previous transportation law, SAFETEA-LU provisions. Mobility management continues to be an eligible capital expense in every Federal Transit Administration (FTA) grant program other than Section 5309.

Coordination with human services will remain a requirement for FTA grantees across the range of all non-rail FTA programs. Coordination with human services continues to be a requirement of statewide and metropolitan transportation planning, and coordination of service delivery continues to be a requirement in all three core FTA grant programs as authorized by MAP-21: Section 5307, 5310 and 5311.” (Partnership for Mobility Management, 2012)

More details about MAP-21 and mobility management can be found at:

http://web1.ctaa.org/webmodules/webarticles/anmviewer.asp?a=3180&z=95

A mobility manager could significantly improve service by helping to find coordination and funding opportunities involving the Department of Labor, CDBG, Medicaid and possibly other federal agencies, as well as many local and regional partners.

Non-FTA Federal Funding

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) allows for non-transportation federal funds to act as local match to FTA funds. The Program Guidance for Non-urbanized Areas (Federal Transit Administration, 2007) provides broader, more inclusive language about this tool than does the Program Guidance for Urbanized Areas (Federal Transit Administration, 2010). The urbanized area program guidance is unclear about use of Temporary Aid to Needy Families (TANF) funds, an area of disagreement in the two regulations. Various documents from the Community Transportation Association of America also support the use of federal funds in less ambiguous language than the Urbanized Area Program Guidance. See Appendix B for specific language from FTA guidance.

Medicaid

Fixed route and demand response providers should explore the potential for partnering with any social service providers who receive Medicaid funding for transportation – especially the Department of Human Services. Medicaid transportation funding is a significant potential funding sources, but unfortunately it is also one of the most difficult to work with.

In most areas Medicaid transportation expenditures are second only to FTA’s transportation funding. Nationally, the $3 billion spent by Medicaid in FY2006 for non-emergency medical transportation represents a small portion of Medicaid’s budget, but almost 20 percent of the entire federal transit budget (Rosenbaum, Lopez, Jorris, & Simon, 2009). However, when asked
about the biggest federal barrier to improved public transportation, the United We Ride Ambassador for FTA Region 5 stated it was complexities in coordinating with Medicaid transportation (Mross, 2011).

Medicaid is a joint program between the states and the federal government to provide medical care for the poor and disabled. It provides funding for non-emergency medical transportation (NEMT), as well as transportation for people with developmental disabilities and some senior transportation services such as programs to prevent seniors from being placed in nursing homes. Much of the transportation funded by Medicaid is for individuals with physical or developmental disabilities that are unable to transport themselves to medical appointments. Transportation for people with developmental disabilities can include group transportation to education, jobs, and human services.

The Department of Human Services and other agencies and non-profits may use Medicaid funding to purchase individual rides or contract for group rides depending on the specific program involved and the purpose of the ride. However, public transportation providers typically encounter a number of barriers to providing these rides. Many transit systems are not approved providers and do not have systems capable of billing Medicaid per trip. Additionally, state level Medicaid officials operate under federal policies that prioritize cost effectiveness over quality of service and tend to be primarily focused only on finding the cheapest rides for patients. Benefits of coordination are not systematically factored into their decisions and are rarely incorporated. These decisions have two significant, unintended consequences:

1. Local transit systems and higher quality private-sector providers are deprived of a significant source of potential revenue.
2. Transit-dependent individuals are forced to ride with less reliable and potentially unsafe providers, as is the case in Muskegon where much of the Medicaid transportation spending goes to unregulated taxis.

Finally, in cases where individual rides are being purchased, it is generally not possible to arrange for Medicaid to pay the full cost of the ride. Medicaid funding for NEMT on fixed route services cannot be contracted and can only be purchased on a per-ride basis, so there is no mechanism for Medicaid to pay for the remaining cost of the ride beyond the fare. Similarly, in some cases Medicaid has been known to only pay the farebox for a demand response ride, which covers even a smaller portion of the actual cost of the ride. We have also heard about issues with assigning profitable rides to private carriers, and unprofitable rides to public carriers. In eastern Idaho, one public operator reports that Medicaid customers who are ambulatory are assigned to the cheaper ride from a private for-profit unregulated taxi that doesn't have a wheelchair lift. The more expensive rides - those requiring an accessible vehicle and those that cover a longer distance - are then dumped on the public operator without providing funding to cover the entire cost.

**Stark Law**

Another barrier is that staff at the Department of Health Services and social service agencies may resist establishing Medicaid-funded transportation arrangements due to regulations under the Stark Law and Anti-Kickback Statute (ASK). However, according to the Office of Inspector General (OIG), “Many arrangements involving free transportation have important and beneficial effects on patient care, but only where such arrangements are narrowly tailored to address issues of financial need, limited transportation resources, treatment compliance, or safety.” (OIG Advisory Opinion 11-02)
LOCAL FUNDING

Communities that successfully leverage FTA funds must have two things: local match and professional staff with the time and resources to research and pursue these opportunities. Federal rules generally allow revenue derived through contracts and contributions to be used as local match. These include:

- Mill levies
- Local government general funds
- Contracts, Contributions & Bulk Purchases of Bus Passes

Communities with high performing transportation systems are proactive about negotiating contracts and contributions with a variety of partners. Whenever possible, contracts should be negotiated for expanded service that serves both targeted populations and the general public. The choice of whether to negotiate a contract or a contribution can be made on a case by case basis depending on the needs and preferences of different partners.

- **Universities, Colleges and other Educational Institutions** – In many communities around the nation students, faculty and staff ride fare-free on local transit through contracts, contributions or bulk purchases of bus passes. In many cases these agreements provide significant funding to local transit providers.

- **Large Employers** – In many communities around the country, large employers contribute or contract with local transit providers for service for their employees.

- **Social Service Agencies and Non-Profit Organizations** – Agreements with social service agencies and non-profits can be structured in several ways. In addition to contracts, contributions or bulk purchases of bus passes, another option is pass-through funding. For example, federal funding for disabled transportation can go to the local transit provider then be passed through to a non-profit that provides the services. In addition to promoting coordination, this arrangement increases the local match the transit provider can use to leverage FTA funding.

- **Commercial Centers** – Large commercial centers such as malls may be willing to enter into contracts for employee transportation service. Additionally, they may be willing to contribute toward increased frequency of service that will benefit their customers and potentially increase business.

Efficiency

Efficiencies can be achieved through coordination. Both the provision of rides and the mobility management function cannot meet the entire needs of the community if it has access only to public transportation funds. Social services must also contribute funds to meet the whole community’s needs.

An example of a missed opportunity for coordination between local government service providers is the City of Muskegon’s Senior Transit Program. The City uses Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds to provide a door-to-door demand response transportation system for seniors. While this program is successful, there are three levels at which it could be improved if the City and County had a better understanding of federal programs and regulations:
1. More funding could be available to expand and improve this service if the program were part of Muskegon Area Transit Service (MATS), allowing MATS to use the CDBG funds as local match for FTA funds.

2. There could be greater efficiency in running the program if it were part of MATS, compared to the current situation in which the City and County are operating separate programs.

3. The City’s four part time drivers do not receive that same high level of training that MATS drivers receive.

**INTEGRATING PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION INTO PLANNING FOR SUSTAINABILITY AND LIVABILITY**

To achieve sustainable, livable communities requires engagement in multi-modal planning by all appropriate government agencies, decision-makers and other stakeholders. In some cases, mobility managers and other public transportation officials may be leaders in these efforts. At a minimum, they need to be broadly engaged in promoting and planning improved and expanded options for transit and carpooling; walking and biking; and transit oriented development. Important partners in these efforts include Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO), Transportation Demand Management (TDM) associations, Transportation Coordinating Committees (TCC), Planning and Public Works Departments, and Sustainability Coordinators.

**Metropolitan Planning Organizations**

An MPO is the federal and state designated regional planning and development agency for an Urbanized Area for which the boundaries are assigned by the U.S. Census Bureau. An MPO may serve many local governments in a multi-county area, or may serve a relatively small number of communities within a single county.

MPOs undertake comprehensive transportation planning programs to maintain local government eligibility for federal and state transportation funds for street and road improvements, as well as subsidies for mass transit. They also perform regional transportation planning which is similar, but on a less intensive scale and is extended to include the entire region.

Public transportation providers often need to be proactive to ensure that MPO staff understand the impacts their decisions have on transit, and to help them develop a broader vision of the role they play beyond relieving traffic congestion.

**Transportation Coordinating Committees**

Transportation Coordinating Committees (TCC) include a variety of city, county and state officials including MPO staff. In rural areas with no MPO the Transportation Coordinating Committee is the primary organization responsible for long range transportation planning.

As with MPOs, TCC members are often primarily focused on road transportation and see transit as a social service program. There may be a lack of engagement and knowledge concerning public transportation. For example, travel demand modeling conducted for transportation planning is typically a four step process that includes a modal split with estimates for transit demand. However, in rural areas the transit demand modeling step is often skipped even if a transit system exists.
Planning and Public Works Departments

A transit system’s effectiveness will be greatly compromised if a community lacks safe and convenient bicycle and pedestrian facilities allowing riders including people in wheelchairs, to travel to and from bus stops. The same is true if transit routes lack bus stops with amenities including concrete pads, shelters, lighting, ADA access and wintertime plowing. Moreover, important bus stop locations may not even be viable at all if features such as bus pull-outs are not designed into new roads and improvement projects for existing roads.

Ensuring that communities plan and build this essential infrastructure requires close collaboration between public transportation officials and planning and public works departments. Transit, bicycle and pedestrian needs must be included in the review process for subdivisions, commercial developments and street projects. We have worked with many communities that routinely miss important opportunities due to a lack of collaboration combined with a failure to incorporate these goals into the community’s local regulatory framework through requirements such as complete streets policies, and engineering standards for bus stop infrastructure.

State and Federal Agency Facility Siting

Livability and sustainability are undermined along with the safety net for economically disadvantaged populations when federal, state, and local government facilities such as schools and offices for social security, motor vehicle departments, veterans facilities and unemployment offices are located in areas with poor transportation access. Transit officials can play an important role in preventing bad facility siting decisions if they are engaged in their communities and willing to speak out early in the facility siting process.

Transportation Demand Management

Transportation Management Associations typically work closely with transit providers to conduct outreach encouraging employers to help promote use and funding of existing bus services, along with building carpooling, walking, and biking options. In the absence of a TDM organization, a mobility manager could play a lead role in these functions.

Sustainability Coordinators

Local government Sustainability coordinators may be good partners and who may be able to take the lead on specific initiatives such as ridesharing and bicycle-pedestrian infrastructure.

Economic Development Initiatives

Using transit as a community economic development strategy requires running at relatively high frequencies, concentrating on high density corridors, and making service more attractive for choice riders.
Smart Growth America is the only national organization dedicated to researching, advocating for and leading coalitions to bring smart growth practices to more communities nationwide. From providing more sidewalks to ensuring more homes are built near public transportation or that productive farms remain a part of our communities, smart growth helps make sure people across the nation can live in great neighborhoods.

1707 L St. NW Suite 250, Washington, DC 20036
202-207-3355
www.smartgrowthamerica.org