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**PUBLIC TRANSIT – HUMAN SERVICES
TRANSPORTATION COORDINATION PLAN FOR
GREENE, MIAMI, MONTGOMERY, AND
PORTIONS OF NORTHERN WARREN COUNTY,
OHIO**

IMPLEMENTATION AND ADMINISTRATION OPTIONS

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by

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IMPLEMENTATION AND ADMINISTRATION OPTIONS¹

The purpose of this memorandum is to establish a process for implementing and administering an ongoing Human Service Transportation Coordination Action Plan for the Miami Valley region. This memorandum also provides suggestions for leading and participating agencies and a recommended organizational and governance structure for a Human Service Transportation Coordination office. Funding, monitoring, and updating strategies are also discussed.

REGIONAL GOALS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE HUMAN SERVICE TRANSPORTATION COORDINATION ACTION PLAN

The implementation of the Miami Valley regional transportation coordination plan should address the goals of that plan, which have been stated as follows:²

- Adopt a regional perspective and approach
- Improve transportation services for all travelers
- Implement transportation improvements in stages
- Maximize
 - Stakeholder participation
 - Coordination of services
 - Eligibility for Federal and other funding
 - Overall cost-effectiveness of services
 - Economic benefits to the region.

The objectives of the regional transportation coordination plan have been stated as follows:

1. Maintain and expand the transportation services network available to seniors, people with disabilities, and people with low incomes.

¹ This memorandum was written by Jon Burkhardt with inputs from Norm Ketola of Nelson\Nygaard and Charles Nelson of Nelson Development. Mr. Burkhardt edited this memorandum and supervised its production.

² *Public Transit – Human Services Transportation Coordination Plan for Greene, Miami, Montgomery, and Portions of Northern Warren County, Ohio: Coordinated Transportation Action Plan*, prepared for the Miami Valley Regional Planning Commission by Westat, et al. February 29, 2008.

2. Make information about that system available easily at both the county and regional level so that the public and advocates have a customer-friendly resource(s) to match travel needs with available options.
3. Actively coordinate among and between transit, human service agencies, and private providers to reduce gaps and overlaps in service.
4. Actively coordinate among and between transit, human service agencies, and private providers to reduce the costs involved in providing specialized transportation and reinvest savings in providing more service to seniors, people with disabilities, low income individuals, and the general public.

The key function of the administration of this plan is to ensure the implementation of these goals and objectives, either as initially stated or as modified over time.

POTENTIAL ACTION STEPS

The Coordinated Transportation Action Plan recognizes that a measured, careful process of implementing one step after another is needed, and that some potential activities may not be taken in the long run after assessing the progress made by the previous steps. The entire sequence of activities might take 5 or more years to accomplish if actions are begun in earnest in 2008. Potential action steps could include:

- In the beginning:
 - Formalize regional / sub-regional leadership councils
 - Develop coordination agreements between transportation providers in each county.
- Next steps:
 - Link the county public transit services at transit hubs
 - Provide easily-accessed regional transportation information.
- Further on:
 - Create a regional trip broker to administer and monitor trips
 - Add new transportation hours, services, and areas.
- Still farther down the road:
 - Centralize management and administrative functions
 - Consolidate some transportation operations.

RECOMMENDED ORGANIZATIONAL AND GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

Most of the truly effective coordination operations are implemented through partnership arrangements in which the participants share power, authority, responsibility, and the benefits of their association. This feature of sharing distinguishes coordination from other kinds of organizational relationships.

Key Program Participants

The major participants in coordinated human service transportation systems are the major transportation providers and purchasers, the advocates of individuals needing transportation, employers and job developers, community- and faith-based organizations, planning and development agencies, and local governments. In the Miami Valley region, some of the key participants should most likely include:

- Transportation providers and purchasers
 - The major public transportation agencies in the 3 counties and northern Warren County
 - County Boards of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities
 - Senior centers
 - County Departments of Jobs and Family Services
 - Private taxi and ambulance operators

- Human service agencies and programs
 - Area Agency on Aging, PSA 2
 - Senior Transportation Expansion Project (STEP)
 - United Way of Dayton
 - Toward Independence, Inc.
 - Graceworks Lutheran Services
 - Goodwill/Easter Seals of Miami Valley

- Planning agency: the Miami Valley Regional Planning Commission

- Local governments
 - County governments
 - City agencies.

Organizational Strategies

There needs to be an organizational and governance structure for implementing the coordinated transportation services action plan. Among other items, this means that there needs to be a leader from among the partners and agreements among the partners as to roles and responsibilities. The organizational strategy needs to be effective and sustainable.

One way of achieving these attributes is to design the coordinated transportation organization around key functional activities:

- Centralizing information on transportation services so that access to service is achieved with one contact, whether it be telephone, computer or other means.
- Assigning or developing a lead agency to centralize trip planning and broker transportation services among transportation providers.
- Coordinating administrative and operational transportation functions.
- Consolidating the delivery of transportation services selectively so that some agencies currently operating transportation services have the opportunity to transfer their operating responsibilities to others, if they wish.
- Adding new services to meet the unmet needs of target populations, fill gaps in services, and reduce overlaps in service.

While the leadership for managing these functions can change over time, it makes sense to initially assign the leadership tasks for coordinated transportation to MVRPC because of its regional focus, its key role in transportation functions, its planning capabilities, its organizational resources, and its current efforts in transportation coordination. Among other potential candidates, MVRPC's has particularly strong qualifications with regards to ensuring that coordinated transportation services can be implemented on a regional basis.

In the long run, it may be more desirable to create a new agency, perhaps a private, nonprofit organization, which could assume the leadership role in human services transportation. The major human service transportation stakeholders in the region, as previously identified, should have a strong role in the operations and oversight of this new agency. For the present time, MVRPC should function as the lead agency. Whatever organization fulfills a leadership role at any point in time, full partnership with other strategic planning and service delivery partners in the region is essential.

Development of the leadership structure and organization will require incremental actions, time and resources to support its development. The incremental development should include

- The creation of a Regional Transportation Coordination Leadership Council of agencies with significant investments in transportation.

- Depending upon local preferences, the creation of sub-regional Transportation Coordination Leadership Councils (perhaps on a county-by-county basis) of agencies with significant investments in transportation.
- The establishment of Memoranda of Understanding among the members of the Transportation Coordination Leadership Council.
- The eventual creation of a new formal organization charged with responsibility of managing and coordinating the delivery of transportation services.

The transition to coordinated transportation management should occur incrementally to sustain a mobility management agency that can integrate the diverse activities associated with the cost-effective and cost-efficient delivery of coordinated transportation services.

Leadership on Specific Tasks

A key element of any action plan is the designation of who will undertake specific actions. At this stage of the planning process, key activities and potential actors include the following:

- For the operation of county / regional travel information centers
 - GDRTA, Greene CATS, Miami County Transit
 - MVRPC
 - County governments
 - United Way.
- For the administration of the vanpool program
 - MVRPC, with the possible assistance of GDRTA.
- For the possible augmentation of Project Mobility operations
 - GDRTA
 - New partners.
- For the construction and operation of new transit transfer facilities
 - GDRTA
 - MCTS
 - Greene CATS.
- For administrative assistance to smaller operators
 - GDRTA
 - Greene CATS
 - MCTS
 - Other major operators.

- For the coordination of agency transportation services
 - A current transportation provider
 - A consortium of current providers
 - A new private non-profit organization.

- For the development of a process specifying how Federal funding, including JARC (FTA Section 5316) and New Freedom (FTA Section 5317) funds, should be administered and distributed
 - MVRPC
 - Regional Transportation Coordination Leadership Council.

- To provide travel subsidies as needed
 - Human service agencies
 - County governments.

The Designated Recipient for Federal Transportation Funds

MVRPC should be the designated recipient for Federal human service transportation funding from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), including JARC (FTA Section 5316) and New Freedom (FTA Section 5317) funds. MVRPC has the necessary regional focus, a current role in transportation functions and funding decisions, and has sponsored efforts in coordinating transportation services for seniors in Montgomery County. MVRPC has also been the provider of technical assistance to a variety of human service transportation agencies and the regular point of contact between the region and outside agencies, such as the Ohio Department of Transportation and the Federal Transit Administration of the U.S. Department of Transportation. It has the planning capabilities and organizational resources to support the responsibilities of the designated recipient.

The Job Access and Reverse Commute Program (JARC): FTA Section 5316

According to FTA, “The JARC program was established to address the unique transportation challenges faced by welfare recipients and low-income persons seeking to get and keep jobs. With many new entry-level jobs located in suburban areas, low-income and/or welfare recipients have found it difficult to access these jobs from the inner city, urban and rural neighborhoods on a daily basis. Further, many entry-level jobs require working late at night or on weekends when conventional transit services in many communities are either reduced or non-existent. Finally, many employment-related trips are complex for low-income persons, often involving multiple destinations, including reaching childcare facilities and other services as part of the trip.” With these challenges in

mind, **“the goal of the JARC program is to improve access to transportation services to employment and related activities for welfare recipients and eligible low-income individuals and to transport residents of urbanized and non-urbanized areas to suburban employment opportunities.”** Activities related to employment might be educational opportunities or training that directly contributes to job attainment. Toward this goal, FTA provides financial assistance for transportation services planned, designed, and carried out to meet the transportation needs of eligible low-income individuals and of reverse commuters regardless of income. Access to funds from this program requires coordination with federally-assisted programs and services in order to make the most efficient use of federal resources. Examples of such projects include fixed-route services oriented to reverse commuters and/or at times specific to access lower wage jobs; shuttle services to/from rail stations; ridesharing activities such as vanpool or carpools, and mobility management efforts.

New Freedom: FTA Section 5317

According to FTA, “The purpose of the New Freedom program is to provide new public transportation services and public transportation alternatives beyond those required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) that assist individuals with disabilities with transportation, including transportation to and from jobs and employment support services.” The New Freedom formula grant program aims to provide additional tools to overcome existing barriers facing persons with disabilities who seek integration into the work force and full participation in society, noting that “lack of transportation is a primary barrier to work for individuals with disabilities.” Thus, the New Freedom program **“seeks to reduce barriers to transportation services and expand the transportation mobility options available to persons with disabilities beyond the requirements of the ADA.”** Examples of public transportation services that go beyond the ADA requirements include expansion, spatially or temporally, beyond what is minimally required; the provision of same-day service; door-through-door service; vehicles and equipment that accommodate larger mobility aids; feeder services; accessibility improvements at non-key stations; and travel training. New initiatives, therefore, may include the purchase of accessible vehicles for accessible taxi, ridesharing and/or vanpooling programs; administration of new voucher programs; the support of new volunteer driver/aide programs; and development of new mobility management and coordination programs among public transportation providers and other human service agencies providing transportation.

Recommendations Regarding the Administration and Distribution of Federal Transportation Funds

MVRPC should distribute JARC (FTA Section 5316) and New Freedom (FTA Section 5317) funds through separate annual competitive processes. As the designated recipient agency, MVRPC will have the following administrative responsibilities in the management of both JARC and New Freedom programs:

- To conduct an area-wide competitive selection process.
- To certify a fair and equitable distribution of funds resulting from the competitive selection process. (FTA specifically notes that “equitable distribution” refers to “equal access to, and equal treatment by, a fair and open competitive process” and that the result of such a process “may not be an ‘equal’ allocation of resources among projects or communities.” FTA guidance also states that it is possible that some areas may not receive any funding at the conclusion of the competitive selection process).
- To certify that each project selected was derived from a locally developed, coordinated public transit-human services transportation plan.
- To certify that local plans are developed through a process that included representatives of public, private, and non-profit transportation and human services providers and participation by the public.
- To manage all aspects of grant distribution and oversight for sub-recipients receiving funds under this program.
- To submit reports as required by FTA.

Other Federal goals and objectives that should be noted include the following, some of which have already been met through the development of this Action Plan:

- To ensure that the Action Plan fully complies with the SAFETEA-LU regulations and with the spirit and intent of the JARC and New Freedom programs as stated in the FTA guidelines.
- To establish a framework by which proposed projects requesting JARC and/or New Freedom program funding can be elicited, evaluated and (within the constraints of the funding available for the region) funded through a competitive selection process that is fair and equitable, well-advertised, and inclusive.
- To ensure that the inventory of services, assessment of unmet needs, the menu of strategies to address those unmet needs, the prioritization of those strategies, and the process for eliciting, evaluating, and selecting JARC and New Freedom projects are derived from a public involvement effort that has effectively reached out to public, private, and non-profit transportation providers, human services providers and other stakeholders representing persons with disabilities, older adults, and persons with low income, and the general public.
- To develop a plan that will encourage not only coordination among services supported by JARC and/or New Freedom program funding, but also coordination among the broad array of community transportation services in the seven-county region. The ultimate goal is to address the unmet needs of persons who rely on community transportation services as efficiently as possible through the beneficial aspects of coordination.
- To ensure that the process for adopting the plan includes the endorsement of the Regional Transportation Coordination Leadership Council, which is composed of a group of stakeholders that includes the MPO, and human service agencies and advocacy organizations representing persons with disabilities, older adults, and

persons with low income, and otherwise reflects broad geographic representation throughout the region.

MVRPC and the members of the Regional Transportation Coordination Leadership Council should also consider developing goals and objectives for administering and distributing Federal transportation funds that are specific to the Miami Valley region. These regional goals and objectives might include some of the following:

- To ensure that proposed projects specifically address unmet needs identified in the Action Plan.
- To ensure that project applications meet specified match requirements.
- To give more weight to projects which address the most severe needs.
- To give more weight to projects that are regional in scope or otherwise involve multiple counties or jurisdictions.
- To give more weight to projects that reduce or minimize duplication of existing services and to projects that utilize or improve access to existing transportation services.
- To give more weight to projects which coordinate with existing public and private human service agency transportation providers or reflect partnerships with non-transit entities or private for-profit or non-profit carriers.
- To give more weight to projects that demonstrate cost efficiency in terms of unit cost of service output, of service consumed, and/or a unit cost reduction for service consumed.
- To give more weight to projects that will serve specific needs of the target populations of this Action Plan: seniors, persons with disabilities, and low income persons. (An example of such a project would be one that would increase economic opportunities for persons with low income.)

STRATEGY FOR UPDATING THE ACTION PLAN

The Human Service Transportation Coordination Action Plan should be evaluated at least every 12 months to determine if changes or revisions should be made. The coordination effort in the Miami Valley region needs to be continually examined to ensure that it is achieving the intended goals and to make improvements as necessary. Also, it may be necessary to include additional stakeholders, to make more specific assignments, or to reorient assignments from time to time.

The need for changes in the Action Plan will be determined by the continuing assessments of the key staff involved and by the results of the evaluation process

associated with the Plan.³ The evaluation of transportation coordination activities in the Miami Valley region should focus on documenting and improving transportation services in the region. The evaluation should be used as a feedback process to indicate what steps to take to make improvements in the coordination process that yield more results as well as more appropriate results.

The information developed in the process of creating the Action Plan should be used as the baseline against which later conditions should be measured. For example, information concerning transportation purchasers and providers should use the *Transportation Providers, Purchasers, Costs, Origins, and Destinations* memorandum of April 2008 as the initial baseline for these kinds of data.⁴

The results of the implementation of the Action Plan should include the sequence of outcomes that can typically be expected from coordinating transportation services. Coordination first changes **institutional structures** (numbers of providers, funding sources used, etc.) and **services** (service types, hours per day, areas covered, etc.). These structural outputs are then reflected in the **performance measures** typically used to assess transportation services (efficiency, effectiveness, and cost-effectiveness). These changes finally lead to **beneficial outcomes** such as increased consumer satisfaction, and greater community mobility and its associated benefits, such as increased health and well-being, more economic activity, and decreased institutionalization. Since at least some of the beneficial outcomes may take years to develop, initial assessments of the Action Plan should focus on the more near-term expected changes. If improvements to the following measures are not seen, changes to the Action Plan would definitely be in order:

- Changes in the structure of local transportation services
 - **Transportation service levels increase:** hours and days of service, areas and types of persons served
 - **Transportation service integration increases:** more funding, less duplication, fewer restrictions on trip purposes, more centralized management, etc.
- Changes in transportation performance measures

³ See *Public Transit – Human Services Transportation Coordination Plan for Greene, Miami, Montgomery, and Portions of Northern Warren County, Ohio: Recommended Evaluation Process for Coordination Activities*, prepared for the Miami Valley Regional Planning Commission by Westat, et al. April 15, 2008.

⁴ *Public Transit – Human Services Transportation Coordination Plan for Greene, Miami, Montgomery, and Portions of Northern Warren County, Ohio: Transportation Providers, Purchasers, Costs, Origins, and Destinations*, prepared for the Miami Valley Regional Planning Commission by Westat, et al. March 7, 2008.

- **Lower cost per vehicle hour or passenger mile** (called Resource Efficiency Increases, which means more service outputs for the same resource inputs)
- **More passenger trips per vehicle hour or vehicle mile** (called Service Effectiveness Increases, which means more services consumed for the same service outputs)
- **Lower costs per trip** (called Cost Effectiveness Increases, which means more services consumed for the same resource inputs).

The best means for the Regional Transportation Coordination Leadership Council to address the qualitative performance of the Action Plan is to carefully track the three above key measures over time. If costs per passenger or per hour (or per mile) decline significantly and permanently, this is an indicator of successful coordination activities. If the passengers per hour (or per mile) indicator falls dramatically and permanently, this is an indicator of real problems. (Short-term seasonal cycles should not be a cause of major concern.) After tracking these measures for several years, overall standards of performance should be established on a regional basis.

The measures used should be used to compare trends in the operation of the system over time. If costs are increasing at a greater rate than the rate of inflation, or if numbers of passenger trips per unit of service are declining, then corrective actions will need to be taken. If costs are relatively stable and the numbers of trips per mile or per hour are increasing, then there are many reasons to be happy with the overall operations and management of coordinated transportation services in the region.

A second means of assessing relative performance is to compare the Miami Valley's performance with that of the performance of other communities. Such comparisons are fraught with difficulty, as local quantitative performance will be significantly influenced by a local community's own goals and objectives, which may or may not be anything like another community's goals and objectives. Differences in terrain, weather, local economic conditions, and service policies can also significantly influence the relative performance of different systems. But it is still important to document what other communities are achieving as a means of understanding what is being accomplished in one's own locality.

Effective action strategies should address the current transportation problems in the Miami Valley region, which have been documented as including the following:⁵

- Traveling across county boundaries is difficult unless you drive.
- Current transportation services are fragmented.

⁵ *Public Transit – Human Services Transportation Coordination Plan for Greene, Miami, Montgomery, and Portions of Northern Warren County, Ohio: Coordinated Transportation Action Plan*, prepared for the Miami Valley Regional Planning Commission by Westat, et al. February 29, 2008.

- Non-drivers have few travel options.
- There is some limited coordination of today's services, but there are still service gaps and overlaps, and substantial system inefficiency. Significant productivity and efficiency improvements are possible.
- No one knows or manages the entire travel options picture: there is no county or regional source to call which can direct the public to the best source of transportation to meet a specific need. Transportation-dependent individuals and their advocates don't often know who to call about transportation-related issues.
- Current public and agency services need improvement.
- There are reported difficulties in obtaining rides.
- Full cost accounting is not generally practiced.
- The number of rides provided could be improved.

Thus, the kinds of improvements that should be observed as a result of implementing the Action Plan would include some or all of the following:

- Traveling across county boundaries in modes other than autos is becoming less difficult than it used to be.
- Current transportation services are documented; information is available on a comprehensive basis; coordination of operations is occurring.
- Non-drivers have more travel options than before.
- On-going coordination has decreased the problems of service gaps and overlaps and substantial system inefficiency; significant productivity and efficiency improvements have been made.
- Centralized information is available concerning the entire travel options picture: there is one or more centralized source[s] to call which to inform the public about the best source of transportation to meet a specific need.
- Improvements have been made public and agency transportation services.
- There are many difficulties in obtaining rides than before.
- Full cost accounting is generally practiced among transportation providers and purchasers.
- The number of rides provided has increased.

Therefore, some of the most immediate and significant benefits that can result from coordination activities in the Action Plan include the following:

- more riders per trip, which creates a more cost-effective use of drivers' time and lowers the average cost per trip
- more transportation services available to more people
- transportation services available to a larger service area and at more times
- a focal point for information about all transportation services in the region
- a "one-stop shopping approach" -- one number to call when individuals need a ride or their advocates need information

- agencies for whom transportation is not a focal point of their mission (and perhaps a burden to them) turn this responsibility over to transportation professionals
- lower-cost operators (including those who can use volunteers) provide some trips at lower costs than some of the high-wage agencies
- transportation professionals provide some services (such as dispatching, maintenance, training, planning, administration, grant applications, etc) that may be more expensive or difficult for non-transportation agencies to procure
- agencies save costs on administration, office space and equipment, training, and the capital costs of vehicles by working together
- coordinated transportation services, operating at higher levels of efficiency and cost-effectiveness, more readily obtain the financial and political support of their communities and higher-level funding agencies.

Comprehensive data analysis efforts should be undertaken every 12 months. The analytical efforts will be based on ongoing data collection activities of all stakeholders. Partners in the coordinated transportation service effort should be encouraged to keep financial and performance records on a daily basis and to report them (at least to their own supervisors) on a monthly basis. This will make the annual analysis and reporting process much easier. The Miami Valley Regional Planning Commission should play a large role in developing the appropriate data collection and reporting procedures for transportation providers and purchasers in the region. If substantial progress towards achieving the goals of the Action Plan and resolving the existing problems can be documented, implementation of the Action Plan can proceed as scheduled. If not, changes will need to be made. These determinations should be the responsibility of the Regional Transportation Coordination Leadership Council.