CHAPTER 4

Goals and Strategies

Challenges to Coordination

Challenges can arise for individuals when they are attempting to connect to transportation options within their community. Connectivity of resources and services presents a different set of challenges in urban communities vs rural communities. Urban communities tend to have stronger public transit systems in place which offer more routes and extended availability of service for transit users. The stops however, may not pick up or take people to their final destinations leaving them with the challenge of finding service for the first or last mile to their destination. Many rural transit systems provide door to door service for riders, but often have a limited number of transit options available and shared rides resulting in routes to the user's destination which are not the most direct. The length of rural driving distances often creates a barrier by adding additional travel time to the trip which can cause scheduling issues with the transit provider.

These connectivity issues present an opportunity for transit providers to coordinate their services and ensure users are presented with all available options and the most direct routes. A regional approach to coordination can offer the transit user greater flexibility to move throughout multiple counties when needing to make longer trips for essential services like medical appointments however, coordination does present its own set of challenges when it comes to transit planning and funding.

The GRMI Planning Committee, through a number of meetings, identified challenges present in regional transit coordination, as well as conducted a SWOT analysis to further identify how regional transit coordination may assist in overcoming challenges and closing gaps in service.

The first step the GRMI Planning Committee took to identifying challenges in coordination was to identify on an individual county level resource needs or obstacles that were present. The information was broken down into a set of lists which was analyzed for commonalities.

Similar challenges to coordination were presented within each county as follow:

- Liability and insurance when sharing vehicles

- Lack of funding

- Misaligned funding policies

- Lack of communication

- Short staffed agencies

- Agency limitations: after-hours, weekends, holidays, service areas

- Lack of technology

- Trip denial plans

- Public awareness of available services

While some challenges presented may not be easy to overcome such as liability and insurance when sharing vehicles or misalignment of state and federal funding policies, many of the challenges to coordination provide unique opportunities at the local level for innovative solutions to connect transit users to their final destinations.

SWOT Analysis

A SWOT Analysis can be a useful tool in assessing a service provided by a transit organization. It can help an organization understand what characteristics it may be lacking, but also allow for evaluation of those characteristics that may provide strength to the organization. This technique is performed by evaluating an entity's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) to help influence the decision making process to achieve the overall goals and objectives. This method was utilized by the GRMI Council to assess transit services on a regional level.

At the first GRMI council meeting in June 2018, a SWOT analysis was conducted and council members were asked to divide into four small groups to focus on respective categories from their agency's perspective, but with a view of the regional perspective.

As discussion took place, facilitators captured and recorded thoughts and ideas. Groups individually discussed factors associated with the SWOT Analysis tool and reconvened as a larger group to analyze the elements of each topic. Results (*Figure S*) were then integrated into an ongoing planning process to form the regional transportation goals.

S

Strength
- Passion for mission
- Mobility management network
- Customer service
- Knowledge of demographic/travel patterns

W

Weakness
- Lack of funding
- Last-minute calls
- Cross jurisdictional boundaries
- Aging vehicles

O

Opportunities
- Urban to rural pickup/drop off points
- Increase local support
- Regional networking
- County-to-county coordination

T

Threats
- Funding limited, low reimbursement, lack ability to share funds
- Local support
- Driver responsibilities are high & pay is low, high driver/staff turnover
- Bed bugs, drugs, etc.

Figure S: SWOT Analysis

Source: MVRPC

Regional Needs and Potential Goals

At the second GRMI Council meeting, members turned their attention to identifying needs and potential goals. A number of these potential goals were shared with the council members at the following meeting, and the potential goals were rated and added to a prioritized list. Many of the needs expressed by riders were echoed by agency representatives on the Council including the following:

• County-to-County transportation;

• Funding issues, in terms of a lack of funds, creating public/private funding opportunities, and paying/billing across counties and agencies;

• Providing transportation to employment both within counties and across counties;

• Securing the safety of transportation related to sharing rides;

• Addressing car or bus repair, aging vehicles, replacing vehicles, a lack of drivers, and retaining drivers were grouped together; and

• Expanding services, whether growing the territory, evening & weekend hours, and creating shuttle services.

Top priority goals to address unmet needs that were prioritized by the group included:

1. Public, private and human services transportation providers establish a brokerage for non-Medicaid eligible NEMT trips.
2. Develop/Use technology for real-time sharing schedules among transportation providers and with hospitals/clinics.
3. Designate an organization and/or person responsible for working with medical facilities and public health so that transportation considerations are part of the planning process.
4. Organize or expand an existing volunteer driver network for drivers who would provide local or multi-county trips based on a referral from participating agencies.
5. Develop inter-county transportation plans and/or inter-agency memorandums of understanding.
6. Collaborate with outside agencies: private funding/workforce development, business round-tables, economic development boards, public health, etc..

Medium Priority:

1. Mobility managers and/or another designated entity develop educational materials, in-person training and online training videos about how to use local transportation options.

2. Implement standardized driver training and performance measures for Section 5310 program recipients and other organizations that provide transportation.

3. Mobility managers or council to keep everyone updated on grant opportunities.

4. Create/expand/advertise/promote centralized transfer points.

5. Fund vehicles and driver training for accessible taxis and/or on-demand services that are wheelchair accessible and operated by qualified drivers. Vehicles could be leased to qualified providers.

Low Priority:

1. Create a drivers incentive program (non-financial rewards).

Over the last five year, the Greater Region has received approximately $5,910,00 in Section 5310 grant funding to support transportation and mobility needs. Of that, $1,460,000 was distributed among sub-region 2a and $4,450,00 was dispersed within the counties of sub-region 2b. Historically, the demand for this grant funding has far exceeded the available funds and it is expected this trend will continue and grow by 10%-20% per year.

Keeping this in mind, MVRPC as the RCA, utilized the data presented in this plan as well as information from the GRMI Council meetings that identified challenges to coordination, the SWOT Analysis and prioritization of needs to work with the stakeholders to develop goals and projects which specifically address the challenges transit users face.

Priorities were combined and refined through discussions with ODOT staff and mobility managers, to ensure they were practical and likely to be implemented. Goals were further broken down into those which could be accomplished through coordination on a regional level or at a county level as to not discount the specific needs and challenges that occur in individual counties. Each year, a SWOT Analysis will be performed to determine the correlation between the Region's needs and the priority of the goals.

The following summary describes the goals and respective strategies to address unmet transportation gaps and coordination needs in the Greater Region.

Regional Goals & Strategies

Goal 1: Enhance Regional Coordination

Strategy 1.1 Coordination of county line transfers

- Timeline for Implementation: Ongoing

- Action Steps:
    - Identify current county line transfer services
    - Identify common barriers for agencies to work through
    - Develop local agreements for shared rates
    - Explore technology opportunities for scheduling shared rides

- Responsible Parties:
    - Regional Coordination Council
    - Local Coordination Councils
    - Mobility Managers
    - Transportation Providers
    - Local Elected Leadership

- Needs Addressed:
    - Promote centralized transfer points
    - Increased mobility
    - Access to employment
    - County to county transportation
    - Funding opportunities

- Outcome:
    - Number of established agreements
    - List of established transfer routes
    - Database of common barriers for transit agencies
    - Vehicles Purchased

- Potential Funding Sources:
    - Local funding
    - FTA Section 5310 funding
    - FTA Section 5311 funding
    - FTA Section 5307 funding
    - Additional federal and state grant sources

- Potential Resources Needed:
    - Additional vehicles
    - Drivers/Increase in staff
    - Updated software
    - Additional funding

- Project Priority Level: Top priority

Strategy 1.2 Explore options for employment transportation

- Timeline for implementation: Ongoing

- Action Steps:
  - Facilitate meetings and outreach with employers
  - Study and review employer/employee work hour needs
  - Identify workforce and HR related groups
  - Develop commuter benefits transportation packet
  - Identify gaps of when transportation providers provide service versus when transportation is needed

- Responsible Parties:
  - Mobility Managers
  - County Workforce Development offices (Ohio Means Jobs)
  - Regional Coordination Council
  - Local Chambers of Commerce

- Needs Addressed:
  - Access to employment
  - Collaboration with outside agencies
  - Expansion of available services

- Outcomes:
  - Establish an employer database
  - Agreements with employers to support employee transit needs

- Potential Funding Sources:
  - Local funding
  - Employer sponsored funding
  - FTA Section 5310 funding
  - FTA Section 5311 funding
  - FTA Section 5307 funding
  - Ohio Means Jobs Workforce Development funding
  - JobsOhio Workforce Grant

- Potential Resources Needed:
  - Funding
  - Additional vehicles
  - Drivers
  - Technology
  - Marketing material

- Project Priority Level: Top priority

Strategy 1.3 Explore opportunities for Non-Medical transportation

- Timeline for implementation: Ongoing

- Action Steps:
  - Advocate for increase in reimbursement rates at state level
  - Support training opportunities for mobility managers to provide travel training to state partners

- Responsible Parties:
  - Mobility Managers
  - Department of Developmental Disabilities
  - Job and Family Services
  - Opportunities for Ohioians with Disabilities

- Needs Addressed:
  - Increased mobility
  - Increase in available funding opportunities
  - Collaboration with outside agencies

- Outcomes:
  - Number of training opportunities available

- Potential Funding Sources:
  - State partner funding
  - FTA Section 5310 funding

- Potential Resources Needed:
  - Staff time
  - Training Material
  - Additional funding

- Project Priority Level: Medium Priority

Strategy 1.4 Explore possibility for regionalized Non-Emergency Medical transportation (NEMT) brokerage

- Timeline for implementation: Ongoing

- Action Steps:
  - Identify all transportation providers that provide NEMT transportation in region
  - Identify traffic patterns for non-emergency medical transportation currently provided
  - Identify potential loss of local match funding to transportation providers who have contacts to provide NEMT and how that can be accounted for if taken away
  - Monitor State of Ohio policy developments on NEMT ride brokerages and public transit

- Responsible Parties:
  - Regional Coordinated Council
  - MVRPC
  - Mobility Managers
  - Transportation Providers

- Needs Addressed:
  - Increased mobility
  - Increase in available funding opportunities
  - Collaboration among NEMT providers

- Outcomes:
  - Database of NEMT providers
  - Regional traffic pattern usage database

- Potential Funding Sources:
  - Local funding
  - FTA Section 5310 funding
  - FTA Section 5311 funding
  - FTA Section 5307 funding

- Potential Resources Needed:
  - Staff time
  - Scheduling software
  - Additional funding

- Project Priority Level: Top Priority

Strategy 1.5 Coordination of Professional Driver Standards

- Timeline for implementation: Ongoing

- Action Steps:
    - Incorporate definitions of Professional Drivers as recommended by the Mobility
    - Transformation Study
    - Review background check criteria for multiple funding streams
    - Establish recommended driver training standards

- Responsible Parties:
    - Regional Coordination Council
    - Health & Human Service providers
    - Transportation providers
    - Ohio Department of Transportation

- Needs Addressed:
    - Increased driver and rider safety
    - Increase in driver network
    - Collaboration with outside agencies
    - Increased communication

- Outcomes:
    - Recommendations on driver standards
    - Cross agency standard background check checklist

- Potential Funding Sources:
    - ODOT grant funding
    - FTA Section 5310 funding
    - FTA Section 5311 funding
    - Local funding

- Potential Resources Needed:
    - Staff time
    - Scheduling software
    - Additional funding
    - Drivers
    - Vehicles

- Project Priority Level: Medium Priority

Goal 2: Increase awareness/knowledge of available transportation options

Strategy 2.1 Expand the specialized mobility transportation tools to include transit provder information for all counties within the region and inter-region partners

- Timeline for Implementation: Ongoing

- Action Steps:
    - Identify potential providers
    - Review potential funding sources
    - Submit applications for website and call center expansion
    - Develop promotional campaign to educate users about transit options

- Responsible Parties:
    - Mobility Managers
    - Regional Coordination Council
    - Local Coordination Councils
    - Transportation Providers

- Needs Addressed:
    - Development of educational resources
    - Potential increased training opportunities

- Outcomes:
    - Expansion of website and call center
    - Database of providers
    - Funding source database available to providers
    - Promotional campaign material

- Potential Funding Sources:
    - Local funding
    - FTA Section 5310 funding
    - FTA Section 5311 funding

- Potential Resources Needed:
    - Staff time
    - Software
    - Additional funding
    - Marketing material

- Project Priority Level: Medium Priority

County Goals & Strategies

Goal 1: Expand current transportation services in county to meet public needs

Strategy 1.1 Expand transit hours and include same day service

- Timeline for Implementation: 2 Years

- Action Steps:
  - Track trip denials
  - Identify reasons for trip denials
  - Research funding opportunities
  - Determine level of driver resources
  - Review types of alternative transportation service

- Responsible Parties:
  - Transportation providers
  - Mobility Managers
  - Regional Coordination Council/Local Coordination Council

- Needs Addressed:
  - Expanding services/after-hours service
  - Additional funding opportunities
  - Access to services

- Outcomes:
  - Trip denial plan
  - List of alternative transportation resources

- Potential Funding Sources:
  - Local agency funding
  - FTA Section 5307 funding
  - FTA Section 5311 funding
  - FTA Section 5310 funding
  - ODOT Office of Transit funding sources

- Potential Resources Needed:
  - Staff time
  - Scheduling software
  - Additional funding
  - Vehicles
  - Additional drivers/staff
  - Marketing material

- Project Priority Level: Top Priority

Strategy 1.2 Explore technology opportunities that will allow for scheduling of shared rides between transportation providers

- Timeline for implementation: 1 Year

- Action Steps:
    - Determine software already in use
    - Identify the ability of software compatibility
    - Identify cost sharing opportunities

- Responsible Parties:
    - Transportation providers

- Needs Addressed:
    - Cross county/County wide transportation
    - Decrease denials due to capacity issues

- Outcomes:
    - List of funding opportunities for software
    - List of available software options in region
    - Transportation agency database

- Potential funding sources:
    - FTA Section 5310 funding
    - FTA Section 5311 funding
    - FTA Section 5307 funding
    - OTP2 funding
    - Local funding

- Potential Resources Needed:
    - Staff time
    - Scheduling software
    - Additional funding

- Project Priority Level: Top Priority

Strategy 1.3 Coordinate cross agency driver employment opportunities

- Timeline for implementation: Ongoing

- Action Steps:
  - Review standard background check checklist
  - Establish list of participating transportation agencies
  - Establish recommended driver training standards

- Responsible Parties:
  - Local Coordination Council
  - Health & Human Service providers
  - Transportation providers

- Needs Addressed:
  - Increase in driver network
  - Opportunity for collaboration
  - Increased communication

- Outcomes:
  - Recommendations on driver standards
  - List of drivers with standard level of background check

- Potential Funding Sources:
  - ODOT grant funding
  - FTA Section 5310 funding
  - FTA Section 5311 funding
  - Local funding

- Potential Resources Needed:
  - Staff time
  - Technology
  - Additional funding
  - Drivers

- Project Priority Level: Medium Priority

Goal 2: Seek additional funding opportunities

Strategy 2.1 Identify opportunities that can promote affordability for passengers

- Timeline for implementation: Ongoing

- Action Steps:
  - Research sources of funding
  - Discuss opportunities at various local meetings
  - Identify partnering agencies

- Responsible Parties:
  - Mobility Managers
  - Local Coordination Council
  - Transportation Providers

- Needs Addressed:
  - Limited funding
  - Affordability of service
  - Additional technology/equipment for increase/efficiency of service
  - Aging Inventory

- Outcomes:
  - Funding sources identified
  - Applications for services/equipment
  - Funding received

- Potential Funding Sources:
  - FTA Section 5310 funding
  - FTA Section 5311 funding
  - FTA Section 5307 funding
  - Local funding
  - State grant funding
  - Additional Federal grant funding

- Potential Resources Needed:
  - Staff time
  - Marketing material
  - Additional funding

- Project Priority Level: Medium Priority

Goal 3: Increase awareness of available transportation options (based on the county specific work mobility managers do to educate)

Strategy 3.1 Participate in meetings which address mobility challenges and solutions

- Timeline for implementation: Ongoing

- Action Steps:
    - Distribute promotional material
    - Discuss opportunities/challenges at various local meetings
    - Develop network partnerships

- Responsible Parties:
    - Mobility Managers
    - Local Coordination Council

- Needs Addressed:
    - Limited funding
    - Increased communication
    - Alternative transportation options

- Outcomes:
    - Share funding opportunities
    - Collaboration and establishment of working groups

- Potential Funding Sources:
    - FTA Section 5310 funding
    - FTA Section 5311 funding
    - FTA Section 5307 funding
    - Local funding
    - State grant funding
    - Additional Federal grant funding

- Potential Resources Needed:
    - Staff time
    - Marketing material
    - Additional funding
    - Training opportunities

- Project Priority Level: Top Priority

Strategy 3.2 Provide Travel Training presentations on available mobility options at social and civic events and offer driver training opportunities

- Timeline for implementation: Ongoing

- Action Steps:
  - Distribute promotional material
  - Provide travel training
  - Provide driver training
  - Educate local and state elected leadership on transportation issues challenges and provide possible solutions

- Responsible Parties:
  - Mobility Managers

- Needs Addressed:
  - Increased awareness of transportation options
  - Increased communication
  - Driver and rider safety

- Outcomes:
  - Share funding opportunities
  - Collaboration and establishment of working groups

- Potential Funding Sources:
  - FTA Section 5310 funding
  - FTA Section 5311 funding
  - FTA Section 5307 funding
  - Local funding
  - State grant funding
  - Additional Federal grant funding

- Potential Resources Needed:
  - Staff time
  - Marketing material
  - Training opportunities

- Project Priority Level: Medium Priority

GREATER REGION TRANSPORTATION COORDINATION PLAN