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A STRATEGY FOR GETTING PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES TO WORK Supporting New Jersey County Transportation

Final Report
December 2012



**A Strategy for
Getting People with Disabilities to Work:
Supporting New Jersey County Transportation**

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2012

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

In 2005 the Alan M. Voorhees Transportation Center (VTC) at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey under contract with the New Jersey Department of Human Services, Division of Disability Services (DDS) and with funding from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), developed a Five-year Transportation Plan entitled *Meeting the Employment Transportation Needs of Persons with Disabilities in New Jersey*. The main goal of the Plan was to identify barriers in transportation to work for people with disabilities in the state seeking competitive employment, and to present recommendations to address those barriers (1).

One of the Plan recommendations was a call to *“Expand the resources available to improve and enhance transportation services for people with disabilities”* (1). To advance this recommendation, the VTC research team focused efforts over a two-year period on exploring potential funding sources and other best practice coping mechanisms that could assist New Jersey’s 21 county community transportation providers, who have served an increasingly significant role in providing community-based transportation in the state since the 1980s, serving people with disabilities, the elderly, those with low-income, veterans, as well as the general public.

Unfortunately these providers have been experiencing severe economic constraints, due to factors including the nationwide recession, as well as the fact that a main state funding source for the majority of county providers – the Casino Revenue Fund’s Senior Citizen and Disabled Resident Transportation Assistance Program (SCDRTAP) – has been significantly reduced in recent years (2).

New Jersey’s county transportation providers are not alone in combating an environment with decreased funding opportunities, increased costs, and increased service demand. Nationwide, community transportation providers and larger transit agencies are all struggling to cope with the recession and to combat these financial challenges, many are taking measures that include service reduction and/or elimination, staff reduction, and trip prioritization – all of which hinder the ability of transportation disadvantaged persons to meet their trip needs (3,4).

The seven chapter report that follows shares a diverse and detailed array of findings determined from both primary and secondary research endeavors that were pursued to achieve the primary goal of improving and enhancing county community transportation options for people with disabilities in New Jersey, particularly those seeking employment opportunity. Specific emphasis was given to determining how county providers could best serve the employment trip needs of this specific population because persons with disabilities are so dramatically underrepresented in the labor market (5).

New Jersey’s County Transportation Providers: An Overview

From their earliest roots in social welfare programs of the Johnson presidential administration, community transportation in New Jersey has grown to encompass an array of transportation services in all 21 of the state’s counties. This growth arose out of several funding sources, many provided by federal agencies as well as one significant state funding source, The Senior Citizen and Disabled Resident Transportation Assistance Program (SCDRTAP).

Many of New Jersey's community transit services began in earnest in the 1970s and early 1980s and were designed to meet the mobility needs of specific populations on the local level. Several counties (including Cape May, Monmouth and Ocean), municipalities, and nonprofit/NGO organizations focused on the needs of older persons and relied on funding from federal programs such as Title III B of the Older Americans Act (Supportive Services) and Title III C of the Older Americans Act (Nutrition Services). At the same time, another funding source, Title XX of the Social Security Act (now Social Service Block Grant or SSBG), was used to address the transportation needs of low-income persons, and later, people with disabilities. Yet another federal program, the Social Security grant fund, Title XIX Medicaid, was used by Union County to fund transportation for medical purposes. Over time, consolidation of services began to occur; eventually these services were merged and bought under county operations.

While meeting the needs of several populations, these early efforts did not serve riders with disabilities well, as most vehicles operated by county systems were not wheelchair accessible. Advocacy by the Office of Special Programs at the NJ Department of Transportation (NJ DOT) and Tri-State Regional Planning Commission, together with the adoption of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, raised awareness about accessibility issues. By the early 1980s, several counties, and NGO operators working with counties, began to acquire wheelchair lift-equipped vehicles through the programs made possible by the Urban Mass Transportation Act Section 16(b)(2) programs (UMTA).

The first federal transit operating funds for county systems came in the mid-1970s from the UMTA Section 147 rural demonstration program, used initially by Sussex County to organize and operate services. The success of Section 147 projects nationally led to the Surface Transportation Act of 1978, which included a formula grant program known as the Section 18 Rural Transportation program. By the mid-1980s, 15 of the 21 counties were using Section 18 to fund operations. In some counties, these funds served as a catalyst to expand services. Elsewhere, particularly in counties served only by private carrier contract, Section 18 spurred new county run programs that provided transportation services for seniors and people with disabilities.

As counties began to expand the scope of their operations, they also began to share ideas and provide support for one another. In the spring of 1981, the NJ Council on Special Transportation (NJ COST) was established. NJ COST focused its attention on securing additional operating and capital funds to support the growing demand for community transit. One revenue stream featured prominently as a potential resource for transportation services: the growing state tax revenues from Atlantic City's casinos. In January 1984, New Jersey enacted the Senior Citizen and Disabled Resident Transportation Assistance Program (SCDRTAP), which provided dedicated funding for community transportation from the state's Casino Revenue tax. SCDRTAP greatly expanded the resources available for community transportation. For example, this funding allowed counties to purchase vehicles – more than half of which were wheelchair accessible.

The July 1990 passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and subsequent development of the NJ TRANSIT ADA complementary paratransit service, Access Link, provided new transportation opportunities for persons with disabilities. Access Link provides public transportation comparable to the NJ TRANSIT (NJT) system to those unable to utilize the accessible bus and rail system by reason of their disability. Then in the late 1990s, FTA's Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) program (Section 5316) was included in the Surface Transportation Act Reauthorization of 1998. This program provided funding for transportation that sought to improve

access for employment in areas not adequately served by transit. In counties receiving JARC funds, increased service has been focused along reverse commute routes that connect riders to key employment centers as well as on advance reservation subscription trips that link the transit dependent to employment destinations not otherwise served by transit.

The advent of these myriad federal funding sources, coupled with increased awareness of the transportation needs of persons with disabilities, especially those seeking employment, has spurred on considerable growth in the county coordinated systems. Further, the ability of the county coordinated systems to serve all of their clientele, including transporting persons with disabilities to work, is dependent upon available funding. However, following two decades of dramatic expansion, the county coordinated systems are now in a period of retraction. Recently the county coordinated systems have experienced reductions in SCDRTAP funding that have resulted in reduced services and ridership loss. Peak SCDRTAP ridership was achieved in 2006, when nearly 1.9 million rides or 48% of all county provided rides were supported with casino funds. Since then, the number of SCDRTAP-supported rides has fallen steadily. The ongoing economic recession and the growth of casino gaming in neighboring states have adversely effected funds generated by the Casino Revenue Tax, and as a result diminished the funds available for SCDRTAP. A continuing decline in ridership is all the more likely given the ongoing reductions in SCDRTAP funding.

While many county providers have worked diligently to replace and expand funding from other sources, the adverse effects of the reduction of this once reliable funding source are beginning to be seen. SCDRTAP, once seen as a panacea for funding community transportation throughout the state, can no longer be solely relied upon to provide consistent financial backing. The county coordinated systems, many of which grew out of initial funding support from federal and other resources, and found refuge in New Jersey's unique dedicated funding source, must now look beyond SCDRTAP and expand their use of federal, state, local and non-traditional funding.

New Jersey's County Transportation Providers: Current Funding Sources

While all New Jersey county providers utilize a mix of federal, state, and local funding, there is great variety in the number and extent of programs utilized. While some counties draw upon a large number of resources, others have not yet availed themselves of multiple funding sources. For example, Middlesex County, a suburban county located in the central region of the state, draws funding from the largest number of funding agencies – a total of 15 separate funding programs in all. Essex County, home to the state's largest urban center, reports funding from only four separate sources – two federal programs, one state program, and locally raised donations.

Community transportation providers rely on federal funding sources to support capital (vehicles), administration, and transportation operation costs. Federal grants include both formula and competitive funding applications. The most commonly used federal funds come from the Department of Health and Human Services (USHHS) and the US Department of Transportation (USDOT). Four subdivisions of the USHHS account for the majority of the federal grant funding used by counties, including the 1) Administration on Aging, now part of the Administration for Community Living (ACL); 2) the Administration for Children and Families (ACF); 3) the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS); and 4) the Health Resource and Services Administration (HRSA). Funding sources from the USDOT are primarily administered by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). The Department of Housing

and Urban Development (USHUD) also provides funding for vehicle purchases through its Community Development Block Program. Federal funding, such as Title III Older Americans Act overseen by the Administration on Aging and Title XX Social Service Block Grant (SSBG) overseen by the Administration for Children and Families, provided the initial funding for some of New Jersey's county systems, dating back to the early 1970s.

Most counties draw a portion of their federal funding from four or five distinct programs. All 21 county coordinated transportation systems operating in New Jersey utilize USDOT/FTA's Section 5310, which provides funding for capital investment and mobility management activities that supports transportation for seniors and people with disabilities. All but one of 16 eligible counties make use of USDOT/FTA's Section 5311, which provides funding to community transportation providers for administration, capital, and operations to rural areas. Two of the USDOT/FTA funding sources that specifically target the needs of employment transportation and the needs of people with disabilities are Section 5316 JARC and Section 5317 New Freedom funds. To date, nine counties in the state have drawn upon JARC funding while only three counties have applied for New Freedom funding. Use of these funding resources has been limited in part to the 50 percent local match requirement for operating funds.

USDOT/FHWA Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) grant funds are currently utilized by only three counties in the state: Bergen, Middlesex, and Monmouth. While CMAQ funds require a much less onerous 25 percent local match, the three year funding limit makes these funds less popular among the county transportation providers.

New Jersey county transportation providers also rely on USHHS grants for support of administration, capital purchases, and operations. The counties overall draw largely from three programs: Title III B Older Americans Act, Title XX Social Services Block Grant, and Title XIX Medicaid grants. Another USHHS program, the Ryan White HIV grant program is used by only two counties. Fourteen counties finance administration, capital, and operational activities using Title III funding, one of the original funding sources for county transportation in New Jersey. Ten counties use Title XX SSBG funding, which can be used for transportation of individuals of any age that meet the income criteria.

Four counties use Title XIX Medicaid for ambulatory medical transportation for individuals meeting the income eligibility. Since 2009, Title XIX Medicaid funded transportation has been managed by the statewide broker, LogistiCare. The transition of Title XIX Medicaid transportation administration to a brokered service has in the short run reduced the number of counties that utilize Medicaid as a source of revenue for their operations. However, this program presents the opportunity for all counties to bring in new revenues and increase efficiencies by covering some of the costs of existing medical trips for non-Medicaid customers by filling empty seats with Medicaid passengers.

Finally, transportation funding provided by USHUD's Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) provides funds for only one county in the state, Burlington County.

Community transportation providers also rely on state funding sources to support administration, capital, and operation costs provided by a number of state agencies including the NJ Department of Human Services (NJ DHS), the NJ Department of Labor and Workforce Development (NJLWD), the NJ Department of Military and Veterans Affairs (DMAVA), NJ TRANSIT (NJT) and the NJ Department of Transportation (NJDOT). The definition of state funding utilized in this report

encompasses New Jersey state agency funding, which may also include pass-through federal funding that is administered by any given department.

All of New Jersey's county coordinated systems rely on the funding provided by the SCDRTAP program administered by NJ TRANSIT while making relatively little use of funds provided by most other state agencies. Generally counties utilize funding from two or three state funding opportunities in addition to SCDRTAP, though usage ranges from a high of five separate state funders used by Middlesex County to a low of one in Essex County, where SCDRTAP is the county provider's only source of state funding. Dependency on SCDRTAP funds range from 90% of the budget in Essex County to 12% of the budget in Somerset County. As such, all counties are experiencing the effects of declining SCDRTAP funding and must look to other revenue sources to meet gaps.

Sixteen county providers use funding provided by the NJ Department of Military and Veteran Affairs for transportation to Veteran Administration clinics and hospitals. Seven counties currently receive Work First/TANF funds for the provision of transportation to education, training, and employment activities so as to allow transition from public support to self-sufficiency.

Two other funding programs offered by the NJ Department of Labor and Workforce Development are focused on transportation to employment: Sheltered Workshop and Supported Employment Transportation offered by the NJDVRs and funds from the Workforce Investment Boards (WIB). Four counties, Camden, Hunterdon, Middlesex, and Monmouth, support transportation to supportive employment locations with funding from the former, while Burlington is the only county making use of WIB funding.

Four counties use funding from DMHS's Peer Grouping program, which provides operating funds for transportation to mental health centers. Two counties, Middlesex and Sussex, use funds from the NJ Courts' Drug Court program, which provides reimbursement for transportation-dependent persons required to attend court counseling sessions. Two counties use NJDHS Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD) funding for transportation service provision – Middlesex County to subsidize sheltered workshop transportation for eligible individuals with developmental disabilities and Monmouth County for transportation to day programs for residents with developmental disabilities. Only Bergen County makes use of NJDH Senior Services' Safe Housing funding, which can be used for transportation for seniors living in congregate housing.

Finally, community transportation providers rely upon three forms of "local" funding: 1) funds raised through their own fare and donation programs; 2) funding provided by municipalities; and 3) resources provided by NGOs that advocate for people with disabilities, including The Arc and Easter Seals.

Self-generated revenue in the form of fares and/or donations is one viable means to raise funds that finance transportation. While fares/donations alone are insufficient to finance transportation, funds collected from passengers should be part of the overall funding equation for community transportation providers. Eleven counties currently collect fares, at least for some trips and include: Burlington, Camden, Hunterdon, Middlesex, Monmouth, Morris, Ocean, Somerset, Sussex, Union, and Warren. Warren County only charges a fare for competitive employment trips. Many more, a total of 17 in all, collect donations/suggested fares. Eight counties collect both fares and donations, differentiating their fare vs. donation policy by trip purpose and/or population served. Only Cape

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May and Hudson counties collect neither fares nor donations. In 2011 revenue from non-grant sources totaled more than \$2.3 million among all of New Jersey's counties, a significant increase from the \$1.7 collected in 2008.

The receipt of funding from municipal sources is limited to six counties: Camden, Middlesex, Monmouth, Passaic, Somerset, and Sussex.

Funding provided by NGOs is more limited than that raised through fares and/or donations. Only four counties in the state receive funding from The Arc: Hunterdon, Monmouth, Somerset, and Warren counties. Both Passaic and Sussex County receive funds from Easter Seals, which is used for transportation for non-competitive employment and very limited competitive employment trip purposes. Easter Seals facilities are located within both counties. Ocean County is the sole recipient in the state of the 21 Plus program, which addresses the needs of students with disabilities transitioning from school-based transportation and entering the workforce. This type of funding source, as provided by NGOs such as Abilities, Inc. and other developers of housing and supports for adults with disabilities, need to be pursued by all counties in order to expand the delivery of mobility to people with disabilities unable to directly access existing transit services.

As demonstrated, New Jersey's county coordinated system providers rely on a variety of federal, state, and local sources to finance the administration, capital, and operational costs of providing transportation. While well provided for in the past by Casino Revenue funds, i.e. SCDRTAP, reliance on this one funding source is no longer a viable option. Some counties have responded to the challenge and have availed themselves of a large number of grant funding options from all levels of government and nonprofit sources. Others have been more reluctant or less skilled at accessing these other revenue sources. In this period of reduced funding and increasing need, it behooves the county providers to consider all possible sources of funding and to replicate the efforts of their peers who have successfully been able to secure funding from additional sources.

In Their Own Words: Interviews with New Jersey's Community Transportation Stakeholders

The research team conducted a series of eight structured interview sessions with 35 stakeholders from 26 organizations related to the New Jersey community transportation field, including the 21 county community transportation system providers. The overall intent of the sessions was to discuss transportation funding opportunities for county transportation agencies as well as other innovations that agencies could pursue to maintain and/or expand their level of service, particularly for New Jersey residents with disabilities seeking employment.

The interviews convened with the 21 county providers sought information on their services, details of the financial challenges faced by each, and how they endeavored to overcome them. The sessions also served to document the effects of funding reductions and afforded participants the opportunity to discuss the unique regional and local issues they experienced in the current restricted economic environment.

It should be emphasized that all counties interviewed expressed interest, dedication, and commitment to trying to offer employment trips to person with disability and other transportation disadvantaged populations. All 21 providers reported offering a mix of competitive and non-competitive employment trips for residents with disability. Interviewees explained that most

employment trips were provided by subscription. Depending on the county, some of these employment trips were provided via deviated fixed route shuttles and others via demand response service. Not surprisingly, those counties with deviated fixed routes seem to be able to offer more employment trips for this targeted population compared to those counties that must rely on demand response service.

Some counties discussed coordinating with other entities to provide employment trips. In terms of unmet needs related to employment trips, limited service hours were discussed. Commuters often do not have a viable return trip at the conclusion of their work day and/or cannot access employment on weekends. Some providers noted that particular employment sectors, such as retail, pose unique challenges because retail work typically requires evening and weekend work hours. County providers also reported employment trips for shift workers as an unmet need.

Regarding funding issues, interviewees reiterated that in addition to being negatively impacted by the general nationwide economic recession, almost all county providers reported they rely heavily on New Jersey casino revenue funding via the SCDRTAP program, which has experienced significant reductions due to factors including neighboring state gambling competition. As one interviewee opined, the historic county transportation provider business model of relying on New Jersey casino revenue funds to support county transportation is broken.

County providers have responded to funding reductions in a variety of ways. The most frequently cited actions include service reduction and prioritization – particularly with regard to destinations, hours, trip purposes and service categories; staff reduction; proliferation of waiting lists for trips, including those for dialysis and employment; and trip denials. Reduced ability to secure match funds often required for grant programs was also highlighted, as was delayed capital replacements. State MPO and NJ TRANSIT interviewees also noted a reduction in applications received for grant programs requiring match funds.

County providers uniformly concurred they must pursue new and diversified funding opportunities. It was agreed among all that no single strategy would completely alleviate the economic duress county providers have experienced; instead, it was acknowledged success would only be realized by pursuing multiple coping strategies. Nine specific strategies were brought up for discussion by the research team and several others were suggested by interviewees. Some key thoughts shared on each follow:

- Bus advertising – generally agreed by interviewees this was an option worth considering. Middlesex County reported success in using bus advertising to generate additional revenue, earning more than \$60,000 from lucrative bus wraps in 2011-12. However, it was acknowledged that bus advertising was not appropriate in all locations, as it is more difficult to interest advertisers in more rural areas that lack a dense population base. Market saturation in a given locale can also impact successful pursuit of this strategy.
- Purchase of Bus and Rail Tickets/Passes – Some county providers have opted to purchase and distribute transit tickets to their customers to encourage public transit system usage, including Monmouth and Middlesex counties. For counties with limited or no NJ TRANSIT bus and/or rail service, purchasing and distributing transit tickets to county customers is not a viable option. However for those counties with access to NJT services, it was emphasized

that promoting this approach is feasible as the NJT system is very accessible for persons with disabilities.

- **Fares and Donations** – In many cases county freeholders have been reluctant to permit fares due to a concern that such action would anger older residents who utilize the service. However, many acknowledged that county residents appreciate and value the service and are often willing to pay. Only two NJ county providers reported not utilizing a fare or donation program, with most utilizing some combination of donation/fare or donation only policy. Overall, county providers have had success with their fare and/or donation programs and several suggestions were discussed regarding how to pursue a successful fare and/or donation program, including applying the same fare to all customers.
- **New Funding Sources** – All counties acknowledged the need to identify new funding sources and most indicated they have focused their efforts to do so. Several interviewees cited the main concern when seeking new funding was that grants most often request the creation of a new service and the counties need to focus on maintaining their existing services. Some counties reported seeking new funding from private funding sources, such as nonprofits. NJ TRANSIT explained that counties that are not connected to their local Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO) are often not aware of how to pursue federal funding opportunities such as the CMAQ program. Other non-traditional funding sources have also been sought include corporate community support from local food stores and area businesses that either serve as employers of county residents and/or benefit from county customers patronizing their business.
- **Partnering with Other Agencies** – Many interviewees emphasized the potential obstacles and issues to be resolved when partnering, particularly in vehicle sharing. The scale of a given operation was also discussed as a significant factor in promoting or inhibiting coordination efforts. Due to these potential obstacles one interviewee suggested that pursuing a coordination effort as a pilot study is a smart approach. Despite evidence of the inherent difficulties in coordination, interviewees did share some success stories of partnering with their fellow county providers to reduce duplicate trips and create new efficiencies.
- **Service Contracts** – Some counties reported maintaining purchase of service contracts with various state agencies/departments. Several counties also stated they were either under contract to provide services for the statewide Medicaid brokerage system, LogistiCare, or were interested in exploring how doing so could yield revenue.
- **Volunteer Drivers** – Several interviewees discussed the use of volunteer drivers and NJ TRANSIT interviewees remarked on the benefit of volunteer drivers for ride matching programs and also cited potential cost savings associated with use of their service. Potential obstacles mentioned included determining the appropriate and necessary insurance coverage needed for volunteer drivers.
- **Improve Efficiencies** – One strategy discussed to achieve improved efficiencies focused on embracing technology by means including standardization of one's vehicle fleet and using tools such as GPS, routing and scheduling software, mobile data computers, and in-vehicle video surveillance. Other strategies to improve efficiencies that were discussed included eliminating all non-essential spending; reducing driver overtime; serving as mobility

managers to their customer base, and implementing or enforcing their current no-show policies.

- Transit Feeder Service – Discussed as a valuable option to pursue in counties with transit service. It was noted that travel training for the customer base is needed, however, if this approach is to succeed.
- Deviated Fixed Routes/Shuttles – Discussed as an excellent way to serve important local and regional trip generators, including employment sites, and can contribute to reduced costs. All county providers in the central region reported using deviated fixed route shuttle services and experiencing success with this type of service. Several counties in the southern and northern regions also use deviated fixed routes/shuttles. One interviewee emphasized that a key factor in creating a successful deviated fixed route service is premised upon a well- conceived route planning process.
- Other Suggestions – A variety of other coping strategies were suggested by interviewees including but not limited to: continue the communication and coordination effort that was initiated through the United We Ride process; investigate how to offer more travel training opportunities to consumers, as travel training offers an excellent approach to teach transportation disadvantaged persons how to safely use transit without fear; consider regionalization of services as a means to maximize capacity and to address the county border dilemma; consider entering into purchasing consortiums for expenses; and eliminate the county border as an artificial service boundary.

In total, all of the findings shared through the interview process were extremely useful in the development of the policy recommendations included in Chapter 7.

National Provider Survey Findings & Best Practice Innovators

The research team developed and administered a confidential, online survey that was fielded to a nationwide sample of community paratransit providers. In total, 186 respondents completed the survey. The survey was designed to capture the experiences, insights, and strategies used by respondent organizations to maintain and enhance services for the transportation disadvantaged, including people with disabilities. A main goal of the effort was to identify innovative strategies employed by these organizations.

Respondent agencies represented a diverse range of public and private community transportation providers. The majority operated at least in part in rural settings (68%), while 44% of agencies provided some of their service in urban settings, and about a quarter of agencies operated in suburban settings (23%). Most respondents reported their agency served people with disabilities and the elderly. Most also transported the general public or welfare recipients/low-income persons. Nearly all agencies received some form of compensation from their riders. Most respondents (79%) reported they charged a fare for services while only 20% requested a rider donation in lieu of fare.

Over 85% of survey respondents reported providing transportation to employment for persons with disabilities and employment trips were cited as the second most requested trip purpose. While providing a large number of trips to employment locations, agencies also stated they had not satisfied the needs that exist for employment trips. Agencies named employment trips (and/or job

training) as their largest unmet need that they would like to fulfill, with nearly four in ten survey respondents indicating that employment trips were their largest unmet need.

More than half of respondent agencies stated that the rides they provided to employment served both competitive and non-competitive work locations equally. Also, almost all survey respondents who provided employment transportation for persons with disabilities reported they provided weekday service, while only slightly more than half offered these services on weekends.

Like New Jersey County community transportation providers, survey respondents also reported experiencing funding declines and associated consequences, such as having to reduce or eliminate services due to economic constraints. Federal programs provided the majority of operating funds for nearly half of all respondent agencies, with fewer relying on state and local funding for the majority of their operating fund. The three most frequently cited federal funding sources used by respondents were Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Section 5307 (rural program); FTA Section 5316 (Job Access Reverse Commute); and FTA Section 5317 (New Freedom). A significant challenge to pursuing federal funding is the need to match this support with local sourced funds. Nearly two-thirds of respondent agencies stated a lack of matching funds limited their ability to apply for grants at least some of the time.

Coping strategies pursued to address funding issues included conventional options such as reducing overtime, service hours, and staff. However, many also reported pursuing some of the ten innovative coping strategies posed in the survey, such as coordination among agencies to share services and/or vehicles (58%), sale of advertising space (47%), and pursuit of foundation or charitable support (37%). In contrast, respondents were least likely to offer feeder service to traditional transit (21%), use volunteer drivers (20%), or purchase public/private carrier bus or rail tickets (12%). Chapter 5 provides detail on some of the obstacles respondents reported they encountered in pursuing these innovative strategies.

From the universe of 186 survey respondents, the research team also identified five programs as best practice models that represented a cross-section of innovation in terms of funding, technology, and service design. Some of the actions pursued by these innovators included: forming public/private partnerships and coordination strategies; combining funding sources; using existing vehicles to provide shared service between counties; utilizing volunteer drivers; implementation of a point deviation/reservation model; and pursuing innovative dedicated funding sources, such as a transportation utility fee. More detail on each of the five best practice programs identified is included in Chapter 5.

In their Own Words: Focus Groups with Consumers with Disabilities Seeking Employment

Two focus groups were convened for this study, with a total of 23 participants who identified themselves as persons with disabilities seeking employment. These sessions were designed to elicit input on unmet employment-related transportation needs of persons with disability in New Jersey.

Discussion at each focus group session centered on participant usage and experiences related to community (county) transportation. Most participants reported they used a variety of transportation modes to meet their diverse travel needs and most of those who identified themselves as employed reported they used different modes to and from work. The majority of participants in both sessions

reported using county community transit for at least one segment of their work and/or other trips. Factors including limited service hours/days and frequency were the most commonly cited reasons for this reliance on multiple transit modes, limited ability to combine work trips with other travel purposes, and overall difficulty in meeting transportation needs.

Suggestions for needed improvements to facilitate employment trips using county transportation focused primarily on the need to increase the span of service availability (e.g. earlier morning and later evening service options), frequency, and geographic coverage. Most participants, including those with experience using public transit, also reported they would be interested in taking a travel training class if it was made available. Numerous participants explained they have had difficulties in planning public transit trips due to confusion regarding understanding schedules/maps and determining the best ways to navigate a given transit station.

Concluding Recommendations

New Jersey county transportation providers are the backbone of the state's community transportation landscape and support the diverse needs of the transportation disadvantaged population by providing life enhancing, and in many cases, life sustaining services. These community transit providers are currently facing tremendous financial difficulties due to the nationwide economic recession and reductions in a main state funding source for the majority of county providers – SCDRTAP. The resultant consequence of these financial difficulties is that providers are struggling to maintain existing services for clients, including those with disabilities seeking to access employment.

The research team pursued a variety of primary and secondary research to determine strategies that could help alleviate the financial burdens New Jersey's county providers and many of their peers nationwide are facing so they can continue to meet the needs of the transportation disadvantaged, the research team pursued a variety of primary and secondary research. Recommendations for moving forward were determined using the information gathered from the various tasks conducted for this study, including the consumer focus groups, key stakeholder informant interviews, nationwide community paratransit provider survey, and from the other best practice research undertaken.

No one single solution will alleviate the current financial crisis affecting New Jersey's county transportation provider community and providers cannot afford to depend on the revitalization of once previously stable sources of funding. As a group, county providers must be open to pursuing some of the innovative and newer strategies discussed in Chapter 7 if they are to not only survive, but thrive into the future.

Recommendations are presented in this report in six broad categories. Overview information on each category follows. For more detail refer to Chapter 7.

Pursue Program Evaluation

Each of New Jersey's 21 county transportation providers should undertake an effort to initiate and/or strengthen their program evaluation efforts in order to determine the economic costs, benefits, and social impacts of the services they provide. Sharing those findings through an educational outreach effort will serve to better inform stakeholders at both the grassroots and

political levels of the critical role county community transit services provide in the state. An informed public and political network can serve as invaluable allies to county providers as they seek to document, publicize, and determine strategies to combat their financial plight. Documentation of the benefits derived from their services will also aid any and all efforts to pursue policies and legislation supportive of county transportation services and would be valuable information to convey when pursuing grant opportunities. Suggested strategies for documenting costs and benefits are presented in Chapter 7.

Pursue Additional Grant Funding Opportunities

New Jersey's county community providers need to commit to actively pursuing both new and underutilized grant opportunities and must continue to envision this component of their work as vital to supporting the family of services they offer the transportation disadvantaged community. In this climate of fiscal restraint, the ability to find expanded funding to subsidize transportation will be challenging. However, there are always new opportunities that can be considered for possible grant funding support, some of which result from truly new funding initiatives, while others could be the result of a given funding program's reorganization (e.g. MAP-21).

Examples of newer and/or atypically pursued federal grant opportunities that should be explored include the Federal Transit Administration's (FTA) Bus and Bus Facilities Livability program and the Self-Sufficiency grant initiative available through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). To successfully acquire new funding, optimum connectivity between those knowledgeable about funding opportunities and the county transportation provider community needs to be established. For example, county providers should collectively meet with the Community Transportation Association of America's Institute for Transportation Coordination to discuss new funding opportunities and strategies pursued by other states. Counties must stay connected with their local Transportation Management Association, Metropolitan Planning Organization, and NJ TRANSIT's Office of Community Mobility. All of these entities can provide assistance and direction in the quest for new funding opportunities, as well as offer vital information on how to secure match funds and innovative match strategies.

Counties should continue to seek grant opportunities with and from nonprofit entities. Many nonprofit organizations that support transportation disadvantaged populations recognize the critical role transportation has in the lives of their clients and some offer funding support for transportation, including the Henry H. Kessler Foundation in New Jersey.

To assist county providers in their quest for grant funds, a grant seeking and writing course targeted to this population should be developed and consideration should also be given to creating a resource guide for county providers that includes valuable information on how to pursue new and/or alternative revenue options.

To address the dilemma of securing match support, county community transportation providers should be aware that federal funds from other programs such as HUD's Community Development Block Grants, the U.S. Department of Health and Senior Services Community Services Block Grants, and funding from Area Agencies on Aging and the Older Americans Act may be eligible as match sources for various FTA grant programs (6). Pursuing in-kind matches is another avenue New Jersey county community transportation providers should explore as a means to meet federal and other grant match requirements. In-kind matches are typically non-cash contributions provided by non-

federal parties. A variety of U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB) circulars provide guidance on in-kind matches including OMB Circulars A-87, A-102 and A-133 (7). Through the best practice scan, it was determined that other states report regularly using in-kind matches to help meet federal match requirements.

Another area of potential regarding match support lies in Transportation Development Credits or Toll Credits (TCs). TCs are permitted by federal law and allow states to use toll credits earned from qualifying toll facility expenditures to serve as a non-federal match for capital transit projects (8,9). Many states including Texas, Florida, Pennsylvania, Ohio, and New Jersey use TCs. NJ TRANSIT uses TCs as a match for some capital funding requirements. New Jersey is in a prime position to explore expanded usage of TCs as a source of match support for federal grants due its numerous toll-road miles.

Pursue Non-grant Funding Opportunities

Pursuing non-grant funding is as important as seeking grant funding opportunities. New Jersey's 21 county community transportation providers should be pursuing all of the strategies highlighted below to the extent possible, as each offers its own unique advantages.

- **Bus advertising** - Although successfully securing bus advertising will not be achieved by all, it is a worthwhile strategy for providers to investigate as a means to supplement existing revenue. On-vehicle advertising revenue is also an eligible source of matching funds for FTA grants. Almost half of the VTC national survey respondents reported pursuing the sale of bus advertising rights and several New Jersey county providers have done so as well.
- **Donation and fares** - To better cope with the existing economic environment, a uniform mandatory fare program should be considered for implementation by New Jersey's county community transportation providers. As determined by the VTC national survey, New Jersey's county providers are not utilizing fare programs as prolifically as their peer organizations in other states. Pursuing a uniform mandatory fare program across all counties will diminish the local political concerns associated with instituting a fare. To alleviate equity concerns associated with a mandatory fare, a uniform reduced fare could be offered to customers with disability and the elderly. For this recommendation to succeed, support may be needed from the State Legislature.
- **Volunteer drivers** - Volunteers in the United States are a valuable commodity and several New Jersey community transportation providers are successfully using volunteer drivers to support their programs. VTC national survey respondents who indicated they experienced difficulty implementing a volunteer driver program reported that the top two reasons were lack of potential volunteer response and insurance issues. New Jersey faces these same issues with volunteer driver programs. The research team recommends the New Jersey Legislature address the insurance barriers for volunteer drivers, which would help increase the viability of volunteer driver programs in the state. These volunteer driver programs can increase transportation options, as well as offer cost savings to county transportation providers who opt to use volunteer drivers, even in a limited capacity.
- **Private sector support** - Pursuing financial support from private sector entities located in the community was a strategy mentioned by several survey respondents and stakeholder

interviewees. Shopping/retail facilities were discussed as potential sources of this type of funding support. In addition to pursuing support from the shopping/retail sector who benefit from the customers county community transportation providers bring to their facilities to shop, private support could also be sought from corporate partners who need their employees to have a reliable mode to reach their work site.

- **Service contracts** - Many county providers have instituted service contracts with both public and private partners, including their local Arc and other nonprofits, adult day centers, and municipalities. Other county providers should consider adopting this strategy. When developing service contracts with municipalities, Camden County described the benefits of such action as a “win-win” strategy because the arrangement provides needed revenue to the county while helping municipalities meet the transportation needs of their residents without having to purchase and maintain costly vehicles.

All counties should consider the benefits of service contracts with public entities, such as the NJ Department of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DVRS) and the NJ Department of Military and Veterans Affairs (DMVA) and seek guidance from counties who have experience with these relationships. In addition, discussion with state government entities such as DMVA is needed to renegotiate the existing payment structure as it fails to cover a significant portion of service costs.

More county transportation providers should establish service contracts with the state’s non-emergency Medicaid transportation broker, LogistiCare. Some New Jersey providers expressed reluctance to partner with LogistiCare because they are not satisfied with the reimbursement rate offered by the latter. Despite the reimbursement rate issue, partnering with LogistiCare offers county providers the opportunity to add Medicaid trips to existing vehicle runs serving non-Medicaid customers traveling to the same destination at least several days per week, such as subscription trips to kidney dialysis centers. This action allows county providers to increase their productivity per hour, while earning revenue with minimal additional costs incurred (10).

Pursue Legislative & Regulatory Opportunities

A variety of legislative and regulatory opportunities exist that could help to alleviate the economic difficulties experienced by county community transportation providers.

- **Federal anti-kickback legislation** - As discussed above, county community transportation providers should seek funding support from private entities, including local businesses that benefit either directly or indirectly from the services county community paratransit providers offer community residents. Dialysis facilities are one type of private entity county providers should pursue for financial support. All county providers interviewed discussed the increased demand for medical and dialysis trips among their respective customer bases. Financial support from dialysis centers would greatly aid the ability of county community transportation providers to continue meeting the growing dialysis service demand but centers have refused such support due to their interpretation of The Medicare and Medicaid Patient Protection Act of 1987, also known as the anti-kickback statute. The Office of the Inspector General (OIG) has developed a variety of safe harbor provisions to protect legitimate business interests from criminal prosecution under the statute (11). Going

forward, it would be useful for CMS to provide a written interpretation of the safe harbor provisions with regard to private dialysis center support for local transportation services.

- ***New Jersey Department of Transportation (DOT) autobus regulations*** - In 1992 New Jersey passed legislation exempting vehicles of paratransit operators serving people with disabilities, persons age 60 and older, and clients of social service agencies from the state DOT's autobus designation, regardless of whether a fare or donation policy was in place. This law prevented paratransit operators from having to undergo costly vehicle retrofitting and incur other costs that would have been required to meet DOT autobus regulations.

Since 1992 however, county community transportation providers have expanded their services to include customers from the general public due to grant opportunities presented through New Freedom and JARC grants, among others. As they are no longer providing service only to people with disabilities and the elderly, county providers are once again potentially subject to DOT autobus operator regulations if they elect to charge a mandatory fare. Legislation to address this issue was introduced in the NJ Assembly in 2012 and Passage of such legislation to extend the exemption of county community transportation vehicles from DOT autobus regulations, regardless of their customers served, is an action that will not only yield cost savings to county providers but also meets federal United We Ride goals of promoting shared services and coordination and the elimination of operating silos based on customer characteristics.

- ***Determination of a new dedicated funding source*** - A new dedicated funding source should be determined for New Jersey's county community transportation providers, as SCDRTAP funding and other frequently relied upon funding programs and strategies can no longer adequately help county providers meet the increasing demand and related costs of service. Many states and local governments have pursued a variety of dedicated funding sources to support transportation including lottery proceeds and sales, property, and fuel taxes (12). To determine the most appropriate dedicated funding source to benefit New Jersey's county community transit providers, an ad hoc advisory committee should be convened comprised of key stakeholders including but not limited to the county providers, NJ COST, NJ TRANSIT, as well as a representative from the New Jersey Department of the Treasury – Division of Taxation. The group should seek data from states imposing similar taxes to those under consideration in New Jersey and should fully examine equity issues associated with pursuit of any consumer tax approach. Recommendations should be determined and disseminated widely so implementation strategies can be pursued.
- ***Match issues: A dialogue with FTA*** – Due to the numerous concerns expressed by New Jersey county community transportation providers regarding their inability to meet FTA match requirements, particularly the 50% operation match requirements, it is recommended New Jersey stakeholders enter into a dialogue with FTA on these concerns. While results are likely to be long term, documenting these concerns with FTA is a critical step toward achieving the end goal of more desirable policy and legislation regarding match funding. Two prevalent match issues to discuss are: expanding sources of local match to include fare box revenue and reducing the requisite 50% operations matching fund support for various FTA programs.

Pursue Operational Efficiencies

Promoting operational efficiencies and measures is an important recommendation and is one that each of New Jersey's county providers has been pursuing and should continue to pursue. The focus of the following recommendations is optimization of existing resources so as to yield much needed cost savings. Specific measures to achieve this recommendation include:

- **Using technology** - There are efficiency-related benefits of using technological tools and applications including GPS, mobile data computers, routing and scheduling software, and in-vehicle video surveillance. Thus, to the extent county providers determine their usage will yield improved efficiencies, their utilization should be considered.
- **Coordination** - Potential benefits of coordination include generation of additional revenue, enhanced mobility, increased efficiency and productivity, improved service quality, as well as other economic and management benefits (13). However, there are challenges to achieving coordination that must be considered and addressed, such as resistance to coordinate, difficulty establishing a workable cost sharing agreement, and insurance issues.

To increase the likelihood of successful coordination, early and frequent communication among partners is needed. To combat the abstract and elusive nature of coordination, potential partners should strategize and plan specific and tangible strategies to be pursued. If services are to be coordinated, a mapping effort that addresses detail on vehicle fleets, service hours in use, service territory covered, etc. should be undertaken. Issues including respective fare policies, as well as other service components such as trip type (e.g. curb-to-curb, door-to-door, etc.) must also be discussed. Also, pursuing a coordination effort as a pilot study is a wise strategy to consider, since pilot efforts are typically time limited and generally impose fewer obstacles in securing funding support. Finally, to enable more robust and consistent coordination efforts among the county providers, NJ TRANSIT and the counties should seek funding support to secure two to three regional mobility managers who will work with county providers to implement coordination solutions among counties and other local transportation services.

- **Service diversity** - A key strategy to creating economies of scale lies in offering a diverse array of service options, which can reduce reliance on costly single occupant trips. Specific means of achieving this goal include developing deviated fixed route and fixed route services, implementing feeder service to other transit options, and developing central transfer points. All New Jersey county providers interviewed either offer feeder service or support the institution of such service if demand warrants. Those counties employing transit feeder service agreed this approach offers a valuable means to expand service areas and options for customers while providing cost efficiencies to service providers. With regard to deviated fixed routes/fixed routes, again county providers interviewed strongly supported this strategy and acknowledged it provides an excellent way to serve important local and regional trip generators, including employment sites, and often contributes to reduced costs. As county providers seek to continue implementing this type of service, they should devote significant attention to the route planning process so they can proactively plan to meet the trip needs of their targeted customer base.

- ***Other efficiency inducing measures*** - Several other efficiency measures were identified through the interviews and national survey effort and should continue to be considered by New Jersey's county providers. It should be noted some of these strategies are solely focused on cost savings. They include: eliminating non-essential spending, including driver overtime; strive to function as a mobility manager to customers, effectively helping them determine the best strategies to reach desired destinations, which may include mass transit; create and/or enforce customer no show policies, which can contribute to service efficiency and yield cost savings; examine existing grant funding sources to determine if efficiencies can be generated by shifting targeted services under specific funding sources; purchase NJ TRANSIT or private carrier bus/rail tickets/passes to encourage public transit usage and familiarity, the use of which can yield cost savings for county providers; support travel training efforts – a critical means to encourage persons to safely and independently utilize public transit; and consider creating purchasing consortiums among counties for expenses including fuel, vehicles, and insurance.

Pursue Employment-focused Services for Persons with Disability

While the recommendations presented in this report were developed with the goal of supporting all county community transportation providers and their transportation disadvantaged customers, specific emphasis throughout the report is on how county community transportation services can continue to meet the transportation needs of persons with disabilities seeking employment transportation. It must be noted that for any of these specific recommendations to be achieved by the New Jersey county community transportation provider community, the difficult financial circumstances under which they are currently operating needs to be remedied.

Specific actions by the county transportation provider community that would most benefit persons with disability seeking employment need to focus on expanded hours and days of service to better meet employment travel needs. Study focus group participants explained that limited service hours was a main reason they need to use multiple travel modes to access employment. Also non-traditional work hours, including nights and weekends, are typical in many employment fields including the sales, food, and service sectors. If county community transportation does not offer service during non-traditional hours, the likelihood of meeting the employment travel needs of persons with disabilities will remain significantly impaired.

Also, county providers and other community transit services need to consider how to better serve “first and last mile” trip needs, which can cover the gap in services that often exists between one’s home, the transit station/stop, and workplace. County providers must consider the locations of major employment generators when planning deviated fixed route services so they can adequately provide service to those locations and alleviate any hindrances customers experience while traveling the “first or last mile.”

Finally, many of the obstacles county community providers encounter in meeting service demand among persons with disability seeking work and other transportation disadvantaged customers are due to land use and planning conditions, not only the current economic environment. The state of New Jersey has a vested interest in promoting job and housing development at sites accessible to public transportation. Going forward, New Jersey needs to support efforts to improve existing land

use patterns so that the transportation disadvantaged have more, not fewer, viable transportation options.

Moving Forward

As noted management consultant and educator Peter Drucker stated, "The greatest danger in times of turbulence is not the turbulence; it is to act with yesterday's logic."

As demonstrated in this report, New Jersey county transportation providers, as well as their peers nationwide, are experiencing tremendous turbulence due primarily to challenging economic conditions. Moving forward, these critical players in the transportation landscape – many of whom provide life enhancing and sustaining services to the most transportation disadvantaged in society – need to look beyond the funding mechanisms that supported their respective services in the past. Instead, they must proactively pursue new and in some cases, bold strategies to maintain and enhance their critical services.

Exploring and pursuing the diverse recommendations presented in this report will necessitate the cooperation and involvement of the vast array of community transportation stakeholders, including the transportation disadvantaged customers who are served by community transit. To assist with this task, a matrix tool appears below that includes each of the report recommendations and identifies potential leadership and supporting partners who may be able to facilitate implementation of said recommendations.

Recommendations Matrix

NOTE: * = potential leadership partner † = potential supporting partner

RECOMMENDATIONS	COUNTIES	NJ TRANSIT	NJ COST	MPOs	TMA s	OTHERS
PROGRAM EVALUATION						
Initiate and/or strengthen program evaluation efforts to determine the economic costs, benefits, and social impacts of the services provided by county transportation providers	*	*	*	†	†	CTAA †
GRANT FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES						
Pursue new and/or atypical federal funding opportunities	*	†		†		
Seek out grant opportunities with and from nonprofit entities	*	†		†		
Establish optimum connectivity between those knowledgeable about new funding opportunities and the county transportation provider community	*	*	*	*	†	NJ DOT †
Meet with CTAA's Institute for Transportation Coordination to discuss new funding opportunities and strategies pursued by other states	†	*	†			CTAA †
Develop a grant seeking & writing course for county paratransit providers		*				NTI *
Create a resource guide on pursuing new or alternative funding strategies for county paratransit providers		*	*			
Explore potential sources of public match support not often used by county paratransit providers	*	*		*		
Explore feasibility of using Toll Credits (TCs) as match support for eligible federal projects		*	*	*		NJ DOT * FTA Regional Office 2 †
Pursue in-kind match support	*	†		*		
NON-GRANT FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES						
Pursue bus advertising to supplement revenue as feasible	*	†				
Institute a uniform mandatory fare program across all counties	*	†	†			NJ Legislature *
Address the vehicle insurance barriers that affect volunteer driver recruitment	†		†			NJ Legislature * Nonprofits †
Supplement paid drivers with volunteer drivers	*	†			†	
Seek private sector support including that of area retailers and large employers	*	†		†		
Initiate service contracts with public and private partners, including LogistiCare	*	†	†	†		
Renegotiate payment rates with public and private partners as needed to more fully cover county provider service costs	*	*		†		

NOTE: * = potential leadership partner † = potential supporting partner

RECOMMENDATIONS	COUNTIES	NJ/TRANSIT	NJ COST	MPOs	TMA's	OTHERS
LEGISLATION & REGULATORY OPPORTUNITIES						
Obtain CMS and/or OIG formal interpretation of the safe harbor provisions to determine if funding support can be sought from dialysis centers		*				NJ Department of Human Services *
Seek continued exemption of county paratransit provider vehicles from DOT autobus regulations		*	*			NJ Legislature *
Establish an ad hoc advisory committee to determine new dedicated funding source	†	*	†	†		New Jersey Department of the Treasury – Division of Taxation †
Foster a dialogue with FTA on match issues	*	*	*	†		CTAA †
OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCIES						
Utilize new and existing technologies	*					
Seek out coordination opportunities to generate economic benefits and service efficiencies	*	†		†	†	Nonprofits †
Secure full time regional mobility managers to facilitate coordination efforts for and among the county providers	*	*				NJDOT *
Implement services that promote economies of scale including modified fixed routes, feeder service, and central transfer points	*	†		†	†	
Eliminate non-essential spending, including driver overtime	*					
Create or enforce customer no show policies	*					
Maximize external funding by matching each grant funded program to optimal funding source	*	†		†		FTA Regional Office 2 †
Purchase NJ Transit or private carrier bus/rail tickets/passes	*	†				
Support travel training for customers	*	†				NJ TIP, Inc. †
Create county purchasing consortiums for fuel, vehicles, and insurance, etc.	*	†				
EMPLOYMENT FOCUSED FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES						
Expand county paratransit service hours and days to better meet the employment travel needs of persons with disabilities	*					
Explore how to better meet “last mile” service needs	*	†			†	
Support efforts to improve existing land use patterns so that the transportation disadvantaged have more viable transportation options						NJ Department of State – Office of Planning Advocacy *

CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION

In 2005 the Alan M. Voorhees Transportation Center (VTC) at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey under contract with the New Jersey Department of Human Services, Division of Disability Services (DDS) and with funding from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), developed a Five-year Transportation Plan entitled *Meeting the Employment Transportation Needs of Persons with Disabilities in New Jersey*. The main goal of the Plan was to identify barriers in transportation to work for people with disabilities in the state seeking competitive employment, and to present recommendations to address those barriers (1). The Plan is considered a living document, and has been received by entities including the Center for Workers with Disabilities as a model approach for addressing the reality that people with disabilities are drastically underrepresented in the labor market, with transportation issues frequently cited as a significant impediment to gaining and retaining employment (14).

Since 2005, VTC, in partnership with DDS, has been committed to collaborating with stakeholders throughout the state and beyond to pursue the ten recommendations identified in the Five-year Plan as a critical means to meeting the employment transportation needs of people with disabilities in New Jersey. This report details the research team's over two-year investigation into the Plan's recommendation that calls to "*Expand the **resources** available to improve and enhance **transportation services** for people with disabilities*" (1).

For the purposes of this report, the "**transportation services**" examined were the services provided by New Jersey's 21 county community transportation providers. Each county in New Jersey operates its own community transportation system providing a variety of paratransit and in some cases more typical transit services to passengers with disabilities and other transportation disadvantaged populations. Since the passage of the State Casino Revenue Fund in the 1980s, these providers have served an increasingly significant role in providing community-based transportation, serving people with disabilities, the elderly, those with low-income, veterans, as well as the general public. The role of counties in providing transportation in New Jersey has also been strengthened over the past 30 years due to continuing federal and state mandates – such as the United We Ride program – which call for increased coordination among the multitude of transportation programs that serve New Jersey residents (15).

For the purposes of this report, the "**resources**" examined encompass funding sources and other best practice coping mechanisms being used in New Jersey and nationwide to achieve the goal of improving and enhancing transportation for people with disabilities, particularly those seeking employment.

Study Need – The Plight of New Jersey County Transportation Providers

The timing of this study is particularly consequential as New Jersey county community transportation providers are experiencing severe economic constraints, due to factors including the nationwide depressed economic environment, as well as the fact that a main state funding source for the majority of county providers – the Casino Revenue Fund’s Senior Citizen and Disabled Resident Transportation Assistance Program (SCDRTAP) – has been significantly reduced in recent years.

The SCDRTAP program was enacted in 1984 and is funded with an eight percent tax on New Jersey casino revenue. Seven and a half percent of casino revenue funds were earmarked for transportation for persons with disability and the elderly. About 85% of that funding is allocated by NJ TRANSIT to the 21 counties using a standardized formula, with about 15% devoted to NJ TRANSIT program administration and accessibility projects (16).

The SCDRTAP program, which became the largest single source of funding for county community transportation agencies, originally yielded three million dollars in its first year, 1984 (17). By fiscal year 2008, the program yielded close to 37 million dollars (18). The importance of SCDRTAP as a revenue source is evident, with 1.6 of the four million total county rides per year funded from SCDRTAP (19). However, with the nationwide recession that began in late 2007, the casino industry has been experiencing consistent profit losses, which is posing a severe economic crisis for county transportation providers, as most rely on SCDRTAP funding as a significant source of program support. In terms of losses, since 2006 transportation funds from this source have decreased by over 30%. (2).

In an effort to improve conditions, New Jersey’s nonprofit community transportation advocacy organization called the New Jersey Council on Special Transportation (NJ COST), initiated a successful legislative campaign that resulted in the January 2010 passage of a law increasing the annual appropriation requirement for SCDRTAP by one percent, from 7.5% to 8.5%. Both county community transportation providers and many of their transportation disadvantaged customers vocally supported the legislation. However, while county providers acknowledged the one percent funding increase has been helpful, most agree it has only provided temporary financial relief. In fact, a three million dollar SCDRTAP reduction was experienced in fiscal year 2012, which ranged from a loss of \$68,000 to \$302,000 per county. Another 14% loss is anticipated for 2013 (2).

New Jersey’s county transportation providers are not alone in combating an environment with decreased funding opportunities, increased costs, and increased service demand. Nationwide, community transportation providers and larger transit agencies are all struggling to cope with the recession. As demonstrated in the nationwide results of a 2011 American Public Transportation Association (APTA) survey of public transit agencies, 83% of respondents reported that they experienced flat or decreased state funding and 71% had flat or decreased local funding (3). With regard to paratransit providers specifically, METRO Magazine’s eighth annual nationwide paratransit survey found that the number one obstacle in providing service was funding, with almost one-third of respondents citing this reason (4).

To combat these financial challenges, transportation providers throughout the country are taking measures that include but are not limited to service reduction and/or elimination, staff reduction and trip prioritization – all of which hinder the ability of transportation disadvantaged persons to meet their trip needs.

In the face of this harsh reality, New Jersey's county community transportation agencies are now searching for other viable, diversified funding sources and seeking to determine new strategies and innovative solutions that will facilitate the continuation and expansion of community transportation services to populations dependent upon that service, such as New Jersey residents with disabilities seeking employment.

Study Need – The Plight of New Jerseyans with Disabilities Seeking Work

Persons with disability seeking to access employment are one group served by New Jersey's county community transportation providers. They are especially impacted by the reduction in paratransit service hours/schedules that all providers are implementing to varying degrees in an effort to contain escalating costs with diminished funding. To better understand the importance of transportation options for this population, it is valuable to first consider their current employment statistics. A July 2012 report from the U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor & Pensions noted that "While all Americans suffered during the recession, working age Americans with disabilities dropped out of the labor force at a rate five times higher than of workers without disabilities" (20). The report also asserts that despite passage of the ADA in 1990 and federal efforts to promote improved accessibility and workforce integration of persons with disability, "...there is no evidence that employment outcomes for people with disabilities as a whole have improved since 1990" (20).

With regard to New Jersey specifically, The New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development (NJLWD) analysis of American Community Survey (ACS) 2010 data revealed that almost ten percent (845,000) of New Jersey residents report having one or more disabilities (5). Approximately 47% of those with disability age 18-64 were in the labor force compared to almost 80% of the state's total 18-64 population being in the labor force. The unemployment rate for persons with disability age 18-64 in the state was almost 20% compared to 10.6% for New Jersey's total 18-64 population. Further NJLWD analysis of ACS data reveals that the 2010 median income of workers with disabilities in New Jersey was 37% less than earnings of workers without disabilities. Impacts of this underrepresentation in the labor market and decreased earnings include overall negative economic and quality of life impacts, including poverty rates often two to five times higher among persons with disability (21).

Reasons for this underrepresentation among persons with disability in the labor market owe to a multitude of factors, with transportation issues often mentioned in literature (22-25). In a recent study conducted by several members of the VTC research team, a survey effort of persons with disability actively seeking employment in New Jersey was undertaken. Findings demonstrated that almost 80% of respondents felt strongly that transportation was important for their job search and 40% cited refusing a job offer because of travel difficulties (26). Further, survey findings also showed that many respondents are using paratransit services, including county paratransit, to access employment.

It is thus critical for not only the benefit of persons with disability seeking employment transportation, but for New Jersey's other transportation disadvantaged populations as well, that county community transportation services remain a vital and core transportation resource in the state. To achieve that goal, county providers need to determine in the immediate future how to best

sustain their organizations and the critical services they provide in a weakened economic and funding environment.

Report Purpose, Organization, & Definitions

The intent of this report is to share the culmination of work conducted by the research team to help identify and discuss viable strategies that can and should be considered by New Jersey county transportation providers as they move forward in uncertain economic times to maintain and expand mobility to transportation disadvantaged populations.

The report is organized into a series of chapters as follows:

- **Chapter one** provides the introduction and overall context for the report;
- **Chapter two** presents an overview of the New Jersey county community transportation providers in terms of their history and services;
- **Chapter three** discusses county community transportation provider current use of various federal, state, local, and NGO funding sources;
- **Chapter four** offers a summary of the key informant interview sessions, conducted with 35 stakeholders representing 26 organizations. These interview sessions served to document the impacts the funding crisis is having on New Jersey's county providers and provided the opportunity to explore the strategies they are pursuing to combat said challenges;
- **Chapter five** discusses findings from the nationwide community transportation provider online survey conducted by the research team. Over 180 providers responded, sharing feedback on how they are coping in a restrictive funding environment. Several best practice organizations are also highlighted in Chapter five;
- **Chapter six** summarizes findings from two consumer focus groups convened with persons with disability who were employed or actively seeking employment to better understand their transportation needs and usage of county community transportation services; and
- **Chapter seven** offers concluding recommendations targeted to county providers, government officials, and other interested stakeholders regarding how county transportation services can continue to serve their communities and transportation disadvantaged populations who rely upon their services, including persons with disability seeking a viable travel mode to reach employment opportunities.

Three terms are frequently referred to in this report: disability; transportation disadvantaged; and paratransit services. For the purposes of this report, the research team has applied the following definitions for those three terms:

- There is no universally accepted definition of the word *disability*. A broad definition was sought for the purposes of this research effort that would be inclusive of an individual with a physical, sensory (visual and hearing), cognitive, mental, and/or speech impairment(s). The definition generally applied in this report was put forth in the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) as "a physical or mental impairment that limits substantially one or more major life activities, a record of such an impairment, or being regarded as having such an impairment" (27). The ADA definition of disability is considered an inclusive definition

and its breadth was expanded in the ADA Amendments Act of 2008 (ADAAA) with enumeration of what constitutes “major life activities.” The 2008 Amendment also instructs courts to construe the definition of disability broadly (28).

- For the term *transportation disadvantaged*, the definition used for the purposes of this research was put forth by The Government Accountability Office, which specifies persons with disabilities, the elderly, and those with low-income who lack the ability to provide their own transportation as transportation disadvantaged (29).
- The definitions used for *paratransit*, which literally means alongside transit, often vary. Again, for the purposes of this report, a broad definition is applied. As described in Robert Cervero’s *Paratransit in America: Redefining Mass Transportation*, “The term *paratransit* was coined in the 1970s to describe the full spectrum of transportation options that fall between the private automobile and the conventional bus. Like automobiles, many paratransit services are flexible and ubiquitous, connecting multiple places within a region, but at a price far below a taxi” (30). As the reader will find in the description of New Jersey’s county paratransit services included in this report, the range of services they offer often include more “typical” demand response services, as well as deviated fixed route shuttles, the latter of which attempt to take advantage of economies of scale associated with such service. It should be noted that the complementary paratransit services required by the ADA for those persons who cannot utilize the existing public transit system are provided in New Jersey by the statewide transportation provider, NJ TRANSIT. That service is called Access Link. In contrast, the paratransit services offered by New Jersey’s county transportation providers, which are the focus of this report, are not required by ADA. In recent years, New Jersey’s county paratransit services have also been referred to as county community transportation. The authors use this newer term as well as the term county paratransit interchangeably throughout the report.

CHAPTER TWO COMMUNITY TRANSPORTATION SERVICES

*“You have to know the past to understand the present.”
Dr. Carl Sagan*

Introduction

In order to understand where we are and where we are going, we need to understand how we arrived at our present state. This is true for understanding the present condition of the county coordinated transportation systems and what their potential will be in the future. While the earliest roots of community transit in New Jersey date back to initiatives such as the Medicaid and Community Action Programs from the Johnson presidential administration of the mid-1960's, the growth of these essential transportation services occurred in the 1970s and 1980s. This growth arose out of several funding sources, many provided by federal agencies, as well as one significant state funding source, The Senior Citizen and Disabled Resident Transportation Assistance Program (SCDRTAP).

New Jersey Community Transportation Services

Community transit services in New Jersey began in earnest in the 1970s and early 1980s. These early efforts were primarily designed to meet the mobility needs of specific populations on the local level. Most of these early systems had at their impetus a particular human service funding source and provided transportation services through a preexisting county department, NGO, or contract with a private operator. Often these transportation services were provided by project staff. In the 1970s, however, the Comprehensive Employment Training and Assistance Act (CETA) provided initial funding and matching funds for some driver positions. Eventually these efforts were merged and evolved into a network of coordinated county systems.

Early Federal Programs

Several counties, including Cape May, Monmouth, and Ocean, focused on the needs of older persons. In the early and mid-1970s these counties operated vans funded under Title III B of the Older Americans Act (Supportive Services). Concurrently municipal and nonprofit organizations provided some of the transportation services for seniors traveling to congregate nutrition sites with funding provided by Title III C of the Older Americans Act (Nutrition Services). Over time consolidation of services began to occur; eventually these services were merged and bought under county operations. The consolidation of these services was likely the first coordination efforts at the county level in the state.

At the same time, another funding source, Title XX of the Social Security Act (now Social Service Block Grant or SSBG), was used to address the needs of low-income persons. Eventually this funding source was also used to expand transportation for people with disabilities to sheltered workshop locations. Mercer and Middlesex counties were among the counties whose coordinated systems grew out of Title XX seed funding.

The Union County coordinated system got its start under yet another federal program, the Social Security grant fund, Title XIX Medicaid. This funding source provided the resources for medical transportation. These resources were bolstered by county funding in excess of the required match and led to the development of medical transportation services for senior citizens who were not eligible for Medicaid funded services.

While meeting the needs of several populations, these early efforts did not serve riders with disabilities well as most vehicles operated by county systems were not wheelchair accessible. Advocacy by the Office of Special Programs at the NJ Department of Transportation (NJ DOT) and Tri-State Regional Planning Commission (a predecessor to the Metropolitan Planning Organizations), together with the adoption of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, raised awareness about accessibility issues. By the early 1980s, several counties, and NGO operators working with counties, began to acquire wheelchair lift equipped vehicles through the programs made possible by the Urban Mass Transportation Act Section 16(b)(2) programs (UMTA). The UMTA has since been replaced by FTA Section 5310 Grants for Transportation for Elderly Persons and Persons with Disabilities.

The first federal transit operating funds for county systems came in the mid-1970s from the UMTA Section 147 rural demonstration program. Sussex County was one of the first counties to apply for a Section 147 grant and used these funds to organize and operate services that formed the basis of the county's community transportation services. Until 1979 the only substantive transportation targeted to senior citizens and people with disabilities in Sussex County was operated by Easter Seals in connection with its Highlands Workshop sheltered workshop services.

The success of UMTA Section 147 rural transit projects nationally led to the Surface Transportation Act of 1978, which included a formula grant program known as the Section 18 Rural Transportation program. By the mid-1980s, 15 of the 21 counties were utilizing Section 18 operating funds. This resource became the catalyst for the expansion of many systems and the initiation of county services in Burlington and Hunterdon counties where services had previously been provided by only private carrier contract. Using the Section 18 funds, Cumberland, Ocean and Monmouth counties greatly expanded their operations and focused their efforts on meeting the transportation needs of senior citizens and people with disabilities. They were able to gear their services toward the transportation disadvantaged so long as the services they provided were open to the general public and operated rural areas of less than 1,000 persons per square mile, as defined by the US Census. This program later evolved into FTA Section 5311 Formula Grants for Other than Urbanized Areas.

NJ Council on Special Transportation

As counties began to expand the scope of their operations, they also began to share ideas and provide support for one another. The NJDOT Office of Special Programs spurred on communication between the counties by sponsoring informal statewide meetings of the county providers. As the need for a more formal coordinated effort became apparent, this loose affiliation evolved and resulted in the NJ Council on Special Transportation (NJ COST), which took its name in spring of 1981.

NJ COST focused its attention on the need for additional operating and capital funds to support the growing demand for community transit, what was then called paratransit. Between 1982 and 1984,

NJ COST leadership began to garner legislative support for the creation of a dedicated funding source to finance transportation for senior citizens and people with disabilities.

Senior Citizens and Disabled Residents Transportation Assistance Program

One revenue stream featured prominently as a potential resource for transportation services: the growing state tax revenues from the Atlantic City casinos. In January 1984 New Jersey enacted The Senior Citizen and Disabled Resident Transportation Assistance Program (SCDRTAP), which provided dedicated funding for community transportation from the state's Casino Revenue tax. The act dedicated 7.5% of Casino Revenue funds to the 21 counties, resulting in full (100%) funding for these community transportation services. When enacted, the counties shared 75% of \$10 million, to be used for administrative, capital, and operating needs. NJ TRANSIT received the remaining 25% of SCDRTAP annual funding to improve accessibility of the statewide transit system and to administer the SCDRTAP program.¹ The SCDRTAP Casino Revenue program greatly expanded the resources available for community transportation and more than doubled the amount of funding that had previously been available to the county systems. The establishment of this funding source allowed for the marked expansion of coordinated community transportation in New Jersey and is seen by some as the real beginning of a truly coordinated system.

For the rest of the decade, the county coordinated systems realized significant changes in their vehicle fleets and the use of technology. One measure of this expansion was increased use of wheelchair accessible vehicles. In 1980 less than 20% of vehicles in the county system fleets were wheelchair accessible. Using 1984 and 1985 SCDRTAP funding, counties purchased vehicles – more than half of which were wheelchair accessible. Despite this effort, by the end of the decade only seven of 21 counties were able to meet the needs of riders requiring wheelchair accessibility.

Also during this period, county providers increased their use of computerized routing and scheduling software to improve efficiency when assigning passenger trips to vehicles and in the management of their programs. Computerized routing and scheduling software, such as the PARRIS automated routing and scheduling software that was purchased by NJ TRANSIT and funded through county SCDRTAP funds in the late 1980s, enabled more than half of the 21 counties to automate their monthly reporting of expenditures and ridership to grantors. Technical support provided by NJ TRANSIT aided the counties in the use of this system.

The 1990s

During the 1990s several developments on the federal level affected the county coordinated systems. The July 1990 passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and subsequent development of the NJ TRANSIT ADA complementary paratransit service, Access Link, provided new transportation opportunities for persons with disabilities. Access Link provides public transportation comparable to the NJ TRANSIT system to those who were not able to utilize the accessible bus and rail system by reason of their disability. The service shadows the regular transit service, as it is restricted to locations within a ¾ mile band of NJ TRANSIT intrastate local bus routes (though not rail lines). While Access Link expanded transportation services for people with disabilities, its privately contracted operations did not include the county coordinated systems as operators and effectively resulted in a separate delivery system.

¹ As of 2010, counties share 85% of SCDRTAP funds, NJ TRANSIT receives 15%.

In the late 1990s the FTA established a new program, the Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) program (Section 5316) with funding from the Surface Transportation Act Reauthorization of 1998. This program provided funding for transportation that would improve access for employment in areas not adequately served by transit, particularly suburban locations. Allocation of this funding was directed toward addressing the transportation challenges of welfare recipients and low-income people seeking employment. Eligibility for this grant program included the county coordinated systems as well as other entities. As a result, while some JARC grants were awarded to the county systems, many were awarded to other agencies such as county workforce development programs operated under the auspices of the Workforce Investment Boards (WIB) and Transportation Management Associations (TMA). Thus, in some cases, opportunities for expanding economies of scale using the resources of the county coordinated systems may have been missed.

In most counties receiving JARC funds, increased service has been focused along reverse commute routes that connect riders to key employment centers as well as on advance reservation subscription trips that link the transit dependent to employment destinations not otherwise served by transit. Mercer and Middlesex counties initially focused particularly on reverse commute routes and routes connecting to warehousing locations near the New Jersey Turnpike Exits 7A and 8A, respectively. Additionally, JARC funds have been used in Middlesex and other county projects to supplement fixed and deviated fixed routes, extending the reach of NJ TRANSIT and private carrier bus and rail services through “last mile connections” to key employment destinations. One example of this are the EZ Ride services in Bergen, Hudson, and Passaic counties, provided by Meadowlink TMA.

Recent Trends

The advent of these myriad federal funding sources, coupled with increased awareness of the transportation needs of persons with disabilities, especially those seeking employment, has spurred on considerable growth in the county coordinated systems. As Table 1 indicates, during the past two decades the county coordinated systems have seen substantial increases in funding, fleet, and system performance. One of the significant changes to the county systems has been a tripling of the number of wheelchair accessible vehicles.

Table 1 County Coordinated Systems, 1990-2008

Performance Measures	1990	1999	2008	Percent	Percent	Percent
				change 1990 to 1999	change 1999 to 2008	change 1990 to 2008
Total Vehicles	770	847	1085	10%	28%	41%
Wheelchair Accessible (% of total)	322 (42%)	557 (66%)	976 (90%)	73%	75%	203%
Total One-Way Trips	3,805,858	3,864,284	4,422,139	2%	14%	16%
Vehicle Miles	13,693,677	17,947,831	18,047,947	31%	1%	32%
Revenue Hours	1,071,422	1,146,139	1,152,532	7%	1%	8%
SCDRTAP Funding	\$12,500,000	\$19,130,100	\$25,698,050	53%	34%	106%

Source: NJ TRANSIT Local Programs Annual report data

However, following two decades of dramatic expansion, the county coordinated systems are now in a period of retraction. Recently county coordinated systems have experienced reductions in SCDRTAP funding that have resulted in reduced services and ridership loss. Table 2 shows the allocation of SCDRTAP funds from 2004 to 2013, as well as ridership from 2004 to 2011.

Peak SCDRTAP ridership was achieved in 2006, when nearly 1.9 million rides or 48% of all county provided rides were supported with casino funds. Since then, the number of SCDRTAP-supported rides has fallen steadily. By 2011 rides supported by this one funding source had fallen to less than 1.5 million, a reduction of 440,000 riders or 23%.

One reason for this decline has been the reduction in SCDRTAP funds to the county coordinated systems that has occurred since 2008 when these funds were at their highest, \$31.4 million. The ongoing economic recession and the growth of casino gaming in neighboring states have adversely effected funds generated by the Casino Revenue Tax, and as a result diminished the funds available for SCDRTAP. Despite a change in 2010 that increased the percentage of the Casino Revenue Tax funds devoted to community transportation from 7.5% to 8.5%, SCDRTAP funding has declined every year since 2008. From 2008 to 2011 SCDRTAP funding has fallen by nearly a third, to a low of \$21.4 million in 2012. SCDRTAP funds are projected to decline further to \$19.2 million in 2013. and are expected to constitute less than a third of the total funding county system funding in 2013.

A continuing decline in ridership is all the more likely given the ongoing reductions in SCDRTAP funding. Discussions with county providers indicate that SCDRTAP funding losses in 2011 and 2012 have led to reductions in drivers and vehicle hours and have resulted in even more dramatic ridership losses.

Table 2 SCDRTAP Funding and Ridership, 2007-2012

Year	SCDRTAP	SCDRTAP	Total System Ridership	SCDRTAP Ridership	% SCDRTAP Rides
	Transportation Funding (mil)	Funding to County Providers (mil)			
2004	\$25.5	\$21.6	3,769,591	1,687,439	45%
2005	\$25.3	\$21.5	3,856,897	1,605,744	42%
2006	\$34.4	\$29.2	3,978,789	1,895,907	48%
2007	\$34.9	\$29.7	4,333,930	1,731,060	40%
2008	\$36.9	\$31.4	4,422,139	1,767,768	40%
2009	\$33.0	\$28.1	4,351,417	1,702,885	40%
2010	\$30.2	\$25.7	4,239,755	1,634,864	39%
2011	\$29.1	\$24.7	3,947,925	1,458,897	37%
2012	\$25.1	\$21.4			
2013 (projected)	\$22.6	\$19.2			

Sources: 2012 Annual Report of the New Jersey Casino Revenue Fund Advisory Commission, May 2012; Senior Citizen & Disabled Resident Transportation Assistance Program (SCDRTAP) Annual Report and Public Hearing, June 2007, July 2008, August 2011 & September 2012 (presentation)

Implications for Getting Persons with Disabilities to Work

The ability of the county coordinated systems to serve all of their clientele, including transporting persons with disabilities to work, is dependent upon available funding. Since its inception in 1984 until 2008, SCDRTAP provided sufficient funding for the county providers to grow service to meet the expressing needs of their riders.

This situation has changed considerably with the decline in SCDRTAP funding. While many county providers have worked diligently to replace and expand funding from other sources, the adverse effects of the reduction of this once reliable funding source are beginning to be seen. As shown in Table 3, from 2010 to 2011, total one-way passenger trips fell by nearly 260,000, or more than 6%. From 2010 to 2011 one-way passenger trips for people with disability fell more dramatically, a decline of nearly 152,000 trips or nearly 14%.

Trips to competitive and non-competitive employment have also borne the brunt of reduced SCDRTAP funding. From 2010 to 2011, trips to competitive employment decreased by nearly 38,000 or 7.5%, while trips to non-competitive employment fell by nearly 14,000 or 2.5%.

Table 3 County Coordinated Systems Trips, 2009-2011

Year	Total one-way trips	Persons with disability one-way trips	Competitive employment trips	Non-competitive employment trips
2009	4,155,954	1,159,012	394,877	515,994
2010	4,218,950	1,117,034	505,406	539,664
2011	3,961,801	965,080	467,556	526,037

Source: NJ TRANSIT Local Programs Annual report data

Conclusion

SCDRTAP, once seen as a panacea for funding community transportation throughout the state, can no longer be solely relied upon to provide consistent financial backing. The county coordinated systems, many of which grew out of initial funding support from federal and other resources, and found refuge in New Jersey's unique dedicated funding source, must now look beyond SCDRTAP. Federal funding sources, which have always been part of the financial equation, must be looked at anew for potential sources of support for community transportation. Additionally, the county providers must avail themselves of grants and other resources made available to state and local agencies as well as nonprofit organizations; these ideas are explored in Chapter 3. Further still, these essential transportation providers have genuine need to explore other, non-traditional ways to gain revenues, which are examined in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER THREE

CURRENT USE OF FEDERAL, STATE, LOCAL AND NGO FUNDING SOURCES

Introduction

Community transit services in New Jersey, as across the nation, rely on a variety of governmental and non-governmental sources to subsidize transportation operation and capital costs. Regardless of the community transit service provider under examination, providers nearly always need to utilize funding sources other than customer fares and fees to cover a major portion of costs incurred.

This chapter examines how the 21 county coordinated transportation systems operating in New Jersey subsidize services using federal, state, local, and non-governmental organization (NGO) funding sources. All New Jersey county providers utilize a mix of federal, state, and local funding though there is great variety in the number and extent of programs utilized. While some counties draw upon a large number of resources, others have not yet availed themselves of multiple funding sources. For example, Middlesex County, a suburban county located in the central region of the state, draws funding from the largest number of funding agencies – a total of 15 separate funding programs in all. Other counties that have utilized many disparate sources of funding include rural Sussex County, which utilizes funding from 14 different programs and urban/suburban Mercer County, which draws upon 13 different programs. Essex County, home to the state’s largest urban center, reports funding from only four separate sources – two federal programs, one state program, and locally raised donations. This overview of available programs and the counties that have drawn upon them will enable government officials, advocates, and human service administrators, as well as the counties themselves, to identify potential funding sources moving forward.

Funding Overview

Community transportation providers in New Jersey draw on a variety of federal, state, and local funding sources to finance capital (vehicles), administrative services, and transportation operations. The most commonly used federal funds come from the Department of Health and Human Services (USHHS) and the US Department of Transportation (USDOT). Four subdivisions of the USHHS account for the majority of the federal grant funding used by counties, including the 1) Administration on Aging, now part of the Administration for Community Living (ACL); 2) the Administration for Children and Families (ACF); 3) the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS); and 4) the Health Resource and Services Administration (HRSA). Funding sources from the USDOT are primarily administered by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). The Department of Housing and Urban Development (USHUD) also provides funding for vehicle purchases through its Community Development Block Program. The specific federal grants used by community transportation providers will be described in more detail in the federal funding section below.

Community transportation providers also rely on funds provided by a number of state agencies including the NJ Department of Human Services (NJ DHS), the NJ Department of Labor and Workforce Development (NJLWD), the NJ Department of Military and Veterans Affairs (DMAVA), NJ TRANSIT (NJT) and the NJ Department of Transportation (NJDOT). The specific grants

administered by these departments and their divisions will be described in more detail in the state funding section below.

Finally, community transportation providers rely upon three forms of “local” funding: 1) funds raised through their own fare and donation programs; 2) funding provided by municipalities; and 3) resources provided by NGOs that advocate for people with disabilities, including The Arc and Easter Seals. These local and NGO funding sources are discussed in more detail in the Local/NGO funding section below.

Federal Funding

Community transportation providers rely on federal funding sources to support capital (vehicles), administration, and transportation operation costs. Federal grants include both formula and competitive funding applications. Federal funding, such as Title III Older Americans Act and Title XX Social Service Block Grant (SSBG), provided the initial funding for some of New Jersey’s county systems, dating back to the early 1970s. It should be noted that the majority of these programs provide formula grants, that is funding amounts are based upon a precise formula that is prescribed through legislation. While formulas are program specific, quantifiable measures such as population, population density, proportion of population unemployed, etc. are utilized to determine funding eligibility and amounts.

The following section provides a description of key federal grants organized by their federal administering agency, followed by an analysis of the use of these federal sources by New Jersey counties.

US Department of Health and Human Services

Administration on Aging

Title III B Older Americans Act - Funding for community transportation operators, including nonprofit sub-recipients, for administration, capital, and operations activities that benefit people 60 and over; a 20 percent local match is required. The New Jersey Department of Human Services administers the funds.

Administration for Children and Families

Title XX Social Service Block Grant (SSBG) - Funding for community transportation operators, including nonprofit sub-recipients, for administration, capital, and operations activities that benefit low-income individuals; a 20% local match is required. The New Jersey Department of Human Services administers the funds.

Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services

Title XIX Medicaid - Funding for entities certified as a NJ statewide transportation broker contract provider for operations, specifically for transportation to medical destinations for individuals meeting Medicaid income standards. Funds are administered by the New Jersey Department of Human Services, which also provides the match.

Health Resource and Services Administration

Ryan White HIV/AIDS Title I - Funding for community transportation operators, including nonprofit sub-recipients, working in communities that have documented more than 2,000 cases of HIV and have populations of greater than 50,000. Funds are to be used for operations that provide

transportation to medical destinations for individuals meeting the Ryan White eligibility requirements – documented HIV status, family income at or below 300% of federal poverty guidelines, and CD4 and viral load tests performed in last 12 months. A 20 percent local match is required. The New Jersey Department of Human Services administers the funds.

US Department of Housing and Urban Development

Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG) - Funding provided to counties and cities for housing related programs that can be used by designated agencies for capital and operations that enhance community mobility. A 20 percent local match is required.

US Department of Transportation

Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)

Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) - Formula funding for community transportation operators, including nonprofit sub-recipients, for operations that result in reduced vehicle emissions; funding is limited to three years and a 25 percent match is required. Funds are administered by Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO) and are used locally for transit services under a transfer of funds from the FHWA to the FTA.

Federal Transit Administration (FTA)

- Section 5307 Urbanized Area Formula Program - Formula funding for a state or local governmental authority, nonprofit organization, public or community transportation operator for administration and capital that provide transportation in urbanized areas with a population of 200,000 or more; a 20 percent match is usually required, though only 10 percent match is required for vehicle equipment needed to meet ADA and Clean Air Act requirements. In designated urbanized areas with population between 50,000 and 200,000, funds can also be used for operations; 50 percent match is required. The funding is administered by NJT.
- Section 5310 Transportation for Elderly Persons and Persons with Disabilities - Formula funding for states and sub-recipients – nonprofit organizations and governmental authorities where no nonprofit organizations are able to provide service – for capital and mobility management activities that meets the transportation needs of the elderly and persons with disabilities. Funds administered by NJ TRANSIT which provides the 20 percent match.
- Section 5311 Formula Grants for Other than Urbanized Areas (Rural Public Transportation) - Formula funding for a state or local governmental authority, nonprofit organization, public or community transportation operator for administration, capital, and operations that provide transportation in rural areas with a population below 50,000; a 20 percent local match is required for administration and capital, while a 50 percent local match is required for operations. The funding is administered by NJT.
- Section 5316 Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) Program - Formula funding for a state or local governmental authority, nonprofit organization, public or community transportation operation for administration, capital, and operations that provide transportation for welfare recipients and low-income people seeking employment in areas with little or no transit; a 20 percent local match is required for administration and capital,

while a 50 percent local match is required for operation. The funding is administered by NJ TRANSIT. (Note: MAP-21 consolidates 5316 into the 5307 and 5311 programs.)

- Section 5317 New Freedom Program - Recent formula funding to states to benefit people with disabilities entering the work force and to augment paratransit, such as NJT's ADA complementary service, Access Link. Recipients include states or local governmental authorities, nonprofit organizations, and public and community transportation operators for administration, capital and operations; a 20 percent local match is required for administration and capital, while a 50 percent local match is required for operations. The funding is administered by NJT. (Note: MAP-21 consolidates 5317 into the 5310 program.)

Federal Funds as Used in New Jersey

As demonstrated in Table 4, the county transportation operators utilize all of these federal funding opportunities, though the specific programs employed by each county differs. Most counties draw a portion of their funding from four or five distinct programs, but as noted earlier, some have actively pursued federal funding such that they have been able to utilize funds from as many as seven separate federal grant programs. One item of note is that Camden County is the only county coordinated system in the state that is organized as a NGO. This may be a factor in the availability of federal funding sources that are generally passed through County agencies and who make recommendations on the allocation of these funds.

The most frequently utilized program is USDOT/FTA's **Section 5310**, which provides funding for capital investment and mobility management activities that supports transportation for the elderly and people with disabilities. All 21 county coordinated transportation systems operating in New Jersey utilize funding from this program.

Another well-utilized federal program administered by the USDOT/FTA is **Section 5311**, which provides funding to community transportation providers for administration, capital, and operations to rural areas. This program, like all of those offered by the USDOT/FTA that provide funding for operations, requires a 50 percent local match for these funds. Despite this, all but one of 16 eligible counties currently has funding from this grant program. The exception, Middlesex County, was eligible for less than \$35,000 in Section 5311 funds in 2010. A decision was made by the county to defer these funds to Warren County in exchange for additional JARC funding, another USDOT/FTA grant program, but this arrangement was only allowed by the grantor (NJ TRANSIT) for one year in FY 2006.

Two of the USDOT/FTA funding sources that specifically target the needs of employment transportation and the needs of people with disabilities are **Section 5316 JARC** and **Section 5317 New Freedom** funds. To date, nine counties in the state have drawn upon JARC funding while only three counties have applied for New Freedom funding. Use of these funding resources has been limited in part to the 50 percent local match requirement for operating funds. Evidence of this challenge can be seen in Mercer County where the community transportation provider has chosen not to apply for JARC funding. Rather Mercer County uses New Freedom funding only for mobility management activities, which requires only a 20 percent match. This strategy appears to be one way that counties could access additional federal dollars to finance existing costs that requires a smaller local match available for operations.

Other funds made available by the USDOT are administered through the FHWA. USDOT/FHWA CMAQ grant funds are currently utilized by only three counties in the state, Bergen, Middlesex, and Monmouth. While CMAQ funds require a much less onerous 25 percent local match, the three year funding limit makes these funds less popular among the county transportation providers. At the end of the third year, county providers need to replace funds for or cease operations of any transportation service made possible through CMAQ grant funds. Additionally, this limitation may not be the only constraint keeping the counties from utilizing these funds more extensively. While less problematic than a 50 percent local match requirement, the 25 percent match is still difficult for many counties to cover.

In addition to USDOT funding programs, the county transportation providers rely on USHHS grants for support of administration, capital purchases, and operations. The counties overall draw largely from three programs: Title III B Older Americans Act, Title XX Social Services Block Grant, and Title XIX Medicaid grants, while only two counties use funds provided by the Ryan White HIV grant program.

Title III funding was one of the original funding sources for county transportation in New Jersey. Many counties whose systems began prior to the advent of dedicated state funding through SCDRTAP grew out of Title III funding. In all, 14 counties use Title III funding to finance administration, capital, and operational activities. Two counties not using Title III funding for transportation are Morris County and Essex County, the latter of which the Department on Aging oversees the Essex County Special Transportation Program. Newer county programs, those developing after the 1970s, have been more likely to use state funds to finance operations, though there are exceptions. For example, Hudson County, as a newer system organized in 1985 following the introduction of SCDRTAP funding, introduced the use of Title III funding in a system organized as a way to supplement those funds. Additionally, neither Ocean nor Middlesex County utilizes Title III funds. Both of these large counties receive Title XX funding through their Area Office on Aging rather than Title III to serve their older populations.

Title XX SSBG funding serves individuals of any age that meet the income criteria. Ten of the state's counties utilize funding from this federal program. These are a diverse set of counties, located both in the state's most urban locations (Essex, Mercer, Middlesex, and Union counties) as well as in its more rural west and south (Cape May, Cumberland, Gloucester, Hunterdon, Ocean, and Warren counties).

Title XIX Medicaid funding is used for ambulatory medical transportation for individuals meeting the income eligibility. Four of the state's counties currently utilize this funding. In the past, most of this funding was allocated to taxi providers from county welfare boards or human service departments. The exceptions were in Essex and Hudson counties where these funds were administered by the regional state Medicaid division offices.

Since 2009, Title XIX Medicaid funded transportation has been managed by the statewide broker, LogistiCare. Since the broker is paid on a set annual fee per eligible Medicaid consumer (capitated rate), the broker has an incentive to contract with the lowest cost transportation provider. As a result, counties have an incentive to compete to provide this service, particularly where they have existing vehicle runs already serving congregate medical destinations for non-Medicaid customers. This presents the opportunity for all counties to bring in new revenues and increased efficiencies that can offset some of the costs associated with their operations. These new revenues and/or

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efficiencies can be achieved by covering some of the costs associated with existing medical trips for non-Medicaid customers by filling empty seats with Medicaid passengers.

The transition of Title XIX Medicaid transportation administration to a brokered service has in the short run reduced the number of counties that utilize Medicaid as a source of revenue for their operations. Currently only Hudson, Middlesex, Sussex, and Union counties serve as transportations providers under the Medicaid brokerage program. Other counties are in negotiations with the statewide broker.

The remaining USHHS funding opportunity, the **Ryan White Title I** program, provides funding to two counties, Middlesex and Monmouth. The Middlesex grant finances transportation services for HIV/AIDS-related medical trips in that county as well as two additional counties, Somerset and Hunterdon.

Finally, transportation funding provided by USHUD's **Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)** provides funds for only one county in the state, Burlington County.

**Table 4 Federal Funding Sources Used by
NJ County Coordinated Transportation Systems²**

Department Agency	USHHS				USHUD	USDOT					
	AOA	ACF	CMM	HRSA	CPD	FHWA	Sec. 5307 Urban	Sec. 5310 Elderly & People with Disabilities	Sec. 5311 Rural	Sec. 5316 JARC	Sec. 5317 New Freedom
Program	Title III	Title XX SSBG	Title XIX Medicaid	Ryan White	CDBG	CMAQ					
Atlantic	x							x	x	x	
Bergen	x							x	Ineligible	x	
Burlington	x				x				x	x	
Camden											x
Cape May	x	x							x		
Cumberland		x					x				
Essex		x							Ineligible		
Gloucester	x	x							x	x	
Hudson	x		x						Ineligible		
Hunterdon	x	x									
Mercer	x	x							x		x
Middlesex		x								x	x
Monmouth	x			X							
Morris				X							
Ocean		x									
Passaic	x										
Salem	x								Ineligible		
Somerset											
Sussex	x		x								
Union	x	x	x						Ineligible		x
Warren	x	x									x
Total	14	10	4	2	1	3	1	21	15	9	3

² Federal funding comes from the following agencies: US Department of Health and Human Services (USHHS) including Administration on Aging (AOA), Administration for Children and Families (ACF), Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMM), Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA); US Department of Housing and Urban Development (USHUD) including the Office of Community Planning and Development (CPD), which administers the Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG); US Department of Transportation (USDOT) including the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), which administers the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ); and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), which administers the Job Access and Reverse Commute Program (JARC) and four other programs used by county providers.

State Funding

Community transportation providers rely on state funding sources to support administration, capital, and operation costs. The definition of state funding utilized in this report encompasses New Jersey state agency funding, which may also include pass-through federal funding that is administered by any given department. Some of these funding sources are provided to counties for transportation by unit cost reimbursement such as per passenger trip or per vehicle hour rather than as a grant to fund specific operation line items such as vehicles or drivers.

Seven distinct funding programs are administered by state agencies, each with its own purpose and requirements. The following section provides a description of the key state funding sources by the administering state department and/or division, followed by an analysis of the use of these funds by counties.

NJ TRANSIT (NJT) Corporation

Office of Local Programs and Minibus Support

Senior Citizen and Disabled Resident Transportation Assistance Program (SCDRTAP) - NJ TRANSIT administers this program, which is funded with 8.5% of the Casino Revenue tax to benefit people age 60 and over and people with disabilities; 85% of the funding is provided to all 21 counties and 15% is retained by NJ TRANSIT for program administration and to fund transit accessibility projects. The county coordinated systems can use funds for administration, capital, and operating expenses; no local match funding is required. As previously noted, the SCDRTAP program has been a main funding source for county transportation in New Jersey since its inception in 1984.

NJ Courts

County Court

Drug Court – Funding administered by the county courts that the county coordinated systems can use for operations that provide transportation to court required counseling appointments. No local match is required.

NJ Department of Health

Senior Services

Safe Housing - Funding administered by county Departments of Aging that the county coordinated systems can use for operations that provide transportation services for senior citizens 60 and over living in eligible congregate housing. No local match is required.

NJ Department of Human Services

Division of Developmental Disabilities

Funding administered by the Division of Developmental Disabilities that county coordinated systems and NGOs can use for operations that provide transportation to people with developmental disabilities to day programs and sheltered workshops. No local match is required.

Division of Family Development

WorkFirst NJ/Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) - Funding administered by county boards of social services/human services departments that the county coordinated systems can use for operations that provide transportation to education, training, and employment activities for individuals (WorkFirst NJ) and mothers with dependent children (TANF). No local match is required.

Division of Mental Health Services (DMHS)

Peer Grouping Funds - Funding administered by DMHS that the county coordinated systems can use for operations that provide transportation for mental health activities. No local match is required.

NJ Department of Labor and Workforce Development

Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DVRS)

Sheltered Workshop and Supported Employment Transportation – Funding administered by the DVRS that the county coordinated systems can use for operations that provide transportation to sheltered workshops and supported employment activities. Funds are provided as an offset on fares that would be charged to participating consumers; no local match is required.

Workforce Development

Workforce Investment Boards (WIB) – Funding administered by the WIB that the county coordinated systems can use for operations that provide transportation to work-related activities. No local match is required.

NJ Department of Military and Veterans Affairs

Bureau of Veteran Services (BVS)

Veterans Transportation – Funding administered by BVS that the county coordinated systems can use for operations that provide transportation to veterans' clinics and hospitals. No local match is required.

State Funds as Used in New Jersey

As shown in Table 5 all of New Jersey's county coordinated systems rely heavily on the funding provided by the SCDRTAP program while making relatively little use of funds provided by most other state agencies. Dependency on SCDRTAP ranges from a high of 90% of Essex County's paratransit budget being supported by these funds, to a low of 12% of the paratransit budget coming from SCDRTAP in Somerset County. With the exception of grants from the NJ Department of Military and Veteran Affairs –which provide \$26,000 annually to Bergen County and less than \$16,000 to each of the other funded counties – county providers are largely not taking advantage of the range of state grants available to them. As demonstrated in Table 5 most counties utilize few additional state agency funding sources offered for mobility services. Generally counties utilize funding from two or three state funding opportunities in addition to SCDRTAP, though usage ranges from a high of five separate state funders used by Middlesex County to a low of one in Essex County, where SCDRTAP is the county provider's only source state funding.

Used by sixteen of New Jersey's county providers, funding provided by the **NJ Department of Military and Veteran Affairs** funding of mobility to Veteran Administration clinics and hospitals is the most utilized state resource aside from SCDRTAP. While this funding has not traditionally covered the full cost of county transportation to the Veteran hospitals, counties have relied upon this funding in part due to the demand for transportation service to the state's veterans hospitals.

Seven counties currently receive **WorkFirst/TANF** funds for the provision of transportation to education, training, and employment activities so as to allow transition from public support to self-sufficiency – Bergen, Burlington, Hunterdon, Middlesex, Monmouth, Ocean, and Sussex. For counties receiving JARC funding, pursuit of additional funding through these state sources may provide a means to expand the availability of workforce transportation.

Two other funding programs offered by the NJ Department of Labor and Workforce Development are focused on transportation to employment, **Sheltered Workshop and Supported Employment Transportation** offered by the NJDVRs and funds from the **Workforce Investment Boards (WIB)**. Four counties, Camden, Hunterdon, Middlesex, and Monmouth, support transportation to supportive employment locations with funding from the former, while Burlington is the only county making use of WIB funding. While participation in NJDVR mobility funding has been closed to new participation by counties in past years as it has largely been supported through an allocation of the Casino Revenue Tax, county systems that currently provide transportation to sheltered workshops should maintain a dialogue with NJDVR so as to pursue new funding that might be available via expanded Casino Revenue tax allocations or federal funding pass-through to the Division. Counties that do not currently utilize NJDVR funding but provide transportation to sheltered workshops should establish contact with NJDVR staff to enable future funding, should it become available.

Peer Grouping funding, providing operating funds for transportation to mental health centers, are being accessed by four New Jersey counties: Atlantic, Bergen, Cape May, and Sussex. This potential resource presents an opportunity for counties to provide subscription service to patient care and outpatient mental health facilities which may dovetail with other transportation they are providing during peak periods.

NJ Drug Court funding, designed to provide reimbursement for transportation-dependent persons required to attend court counseling sessions, is currently only accessed by Middlesex and Sussex counties.

Middlesex and Monmouth counties both use **NJDHS Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD)** funding for transportation service provision. These funds allow Middlesex County to subsidize the costs of sheltered workshop transportation for eligible individuals with developmental disabilities. Monmouth County receives NJDDD funding for transportation to day programs for residents with developmental disabilities. Utilizing these funding sources could provide opportunities for offering transportation services that could be coordinated with other transportation services for people with disabilities currently being operated by the counties.

Only Bergen County makes use of funding from the **Safe Housing** program, which can be used for transportation for seniors living in congregate housing.

Overall, based on participation in state funding by counties, it is clear that opportunities exist for taking advantage of heretofore unutilized state funding sources. In the case of WIB and Safe Housing funds, only a single county in the state currently uses these funds for transportation,

Burlington and Bergen counties, respectively. Three other programs fund three or fewer counties – NJDVR’s Sheltered Workshop, NJ Courts’ Drug Court, and NJDHS’s Division of Developmental Disabilities funding. All of these programs, as well as others that have been used only in a limited manner, should be considered as potential sources of future funding. While certain programs may have limited funding at the current time, such as the Sheltered Workshop program, relationships established between the county coordinated systems and the state agencies who grant funding would be beneficial and may facilitate funding in the future.

**Table 5 State Funding Sources Used by
NJ County Coordinated Transportation Systems³**

Department	Division	Program	NJ Transit		NJ Courts		NJDOH		NJ DHS			NJLWD		NJDMVA
			Local Programs & Minibus Support	SCADRTAP	County Courts	Drug Court	Senior Services	Safe Housing	DDD	DFD	DMHAS	DVRS	Workforce Development	
	Atlantic		x							x				x
	Bergen		x				x			x				x
	Burlington		x									x		x
	Camden		x											x
	Cape May		x							x				x
	Cumberland		x											x
	Essex		x											
	Gloucester		x											x
	Hudson		x											x
	Hunterdon		x									x		
	Mercer		x											x
	Middlesex		x			x				x				x
	Morrmouth		x						x					
	Morris		x											
	Ocean		x											x
	Passaic		x											x
	Salem		x											
	Somerset		x											x
	Sussex		x							x				x
	Union		x											x
	Warren		x											x
	Total		21		2		1	2	7	4	3	1		16

³ State funding programs include those administered by the following: NJ TRANSIT, which administers Senior Citizens and Disabled Residents Transportation Assistance Program (SCADRTAP); the NJ Courts; the NJ Department of Health (NJDOH); the NJ Department of Human Services (NJ DHS), which includes the Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD), the Division of Family Development's (DFD) Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Program (TANF), and the Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHS); the NJ Department of Labor and Workforce Development (NJLWD), which includes Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DVRS) and Workforce Investment Board (WIB); and the NJ Department of Military and Veterans Affairs (NJDMVA).

Local Funding and NGO Grants

For the purposes of this study the classification of local funding and NGO grants includes funding provided by individual municipalities and NGO agencies, which provide services directed toward people with disabilities. This category also includes non-grant forms of transportation subsidy including donations, fares, and other payments made in lieu of fares, such as advertising revenue and private sector support for transportation services.

It should be noted that the NGO categories included in this section are limited to those from which at least one county in the state receives funding that supports transportation. Counties are limited by which NGOs may serve as potential funders, since not all NGOs serving people with disabilities operate in all counties. Further, some may limit their financial support of transportation to only a select number of their county locations.

The following section provides a description of the local and NGO funding sources by lead agency or organization, followed by an analysis of the use of these funds by counties.

NJ County Coordinated Transportation Systems

Fare Programs - A mandatory fare collected by some counties either on the vehicle or through customer billing, proceeds from which offset the operating costs of transportation.

Donation and Suggested Fare Programs – Non-mandatory, but actively solicited contribution collected by most counties, which may be gained either through on-vehicle collection or distribution of mailed envelopes to offset transportation operating costs.

Non-fare Revenue Programs – These are other ways that community transportation providers can raise revenues, such as bus advertising and private corporate contributions to offset transportation costs. Several of these practices are innovative and discussed in greater detail in Chapter 5.

Pass-through SCDRTAP Funding – A portions of the county SCDRTAP allocation that some counties provide to fund local NGOs to provide services that directly benefit people with disabilities

Municipalities

County Transportation Contracts - Contracts between municipalities and the county providers to provide services for older persons and persons with disabilities. In some instances, county providers charge back a portion of the cost for food shopping, shuttle routes, or other group runs to municipalities served.

Non-Governmental Organizations

Disability Advocacy Agencies - Agencies including The Arc, Easter Seals, and 21 Plus provide funding for directly operated transportation and subsidy for county coordinated transportation system transportation. This may also involve funding of services to day activity and sheltered workshops operated by these agencies.

Other Private Organizations - Hospitals and retail stores provide funding for county coordinated transportation system to offset the cost of services that directly benefit these agencies/organizations.

Vehicle Leasebacks - NGO agencies leaseback their FTA Section 5310 funded vehicles to county coordinated transportation systems in return for receiving transportation services that directly benefit their consumers.

Local and NGO Funds as Used in New Jersey

Self-generated revenue in the form of **fares and/or donations** is one viable means to raise funds that finance transportation. While fares/donations alone are insufficient to finance transportation, funds collected from passengers should be part of the overall funding equation for community transportation providers. As seen in Table 6, a total of 11 counties currently collect fares, at least for some trips and include: Burlington, Camden, Hunterdon, Middlesex, Monmouth, Morris, Ocean, Somerset, Sussex, Union, and Warren. Warren County only charges a fare for competitive employment trips. Many more, a total of 17 in all, collect donations/suggested fares. Only Cape May and Hudson counties collect neither fares nor donations. Cape May, which was the first county coordinated system, established in 1973, has retained its name of Fare Free Transportation, which now creates an impediment to charging fares and requesting donations.

In 2011 revenue from non-grant sources totaled more than \$2.3 million among all of New Jersey's counties, a significant increase from the \$1.7 collected in 2008. Fare box recovery for donations and mandatory fares was less than 5% of the total operating expenses for the 21 county systems. Fares accounted for a majority of non-grant revenue, though other non-grant revenue has been raised by the county providers. One county, Middlesex, raised over \$30,000 in revenue from its vehicle exterior advertising program in 2011 (see Chapter 5).

The receipt of funding from **municipal sources** is limited to six counties: Camden, Middlesex, Monmouth, Passaic, Somerset, and Sussex. In Middlesex, contracts with two municipalities replaced municipal shopping and medical services previously provided directly by the municipalities. In Monmouth County, food shopping services provided to senior citizens on a one-two day per week basis are provided to more than half of the counties' 52 municipalities and provides over \$75,000 in annual revenue to the county program. In Passaic County, funding is received from cities including Passaic, Paterson, and Clifton and represents over 12% of the total program funding and funds operations provided under contract by municipal operators in each of these cities. Municipal funding in Somerset County provides support for transportation to recreational destinations for senior citizens. In Sussex County municipal support is limited to the municipalities of Vernon and Hardyston and represents less than 5% of the overall program funding.

Funding provided by **NGOs** is more limited than that raised through fares and/donations. Only four counties in the state receive funding from **The Arc**. Hunterdon County uses Arc funding to cover the costs of non-competitive employment and provides \$200,000 in annual funding. In Monmouth, Arc funding is provided by payments in lieu of fares covering a variety of employment and day programs. Somerset County receives \$355,000 in Arc funding, which supports a combination of non-competitive employment and education programs for people with disabilities. Warren County receives some limited funding from The Arc agency located in that county.

Both Passaic and Sussex County receive funds from **Easter Seals**, which is used for transportation for non-competitive employment and very limited competitive employment trip purposes. Easter Seals facilities are located within both counties.

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Ocean County is the sole recipient in the state of the **21 Plus** program, which addresses the needs of students with disabilities transitioning from school-based transportation and entering the workforce in Ocean County. This type of funding source, as provided by NGOs such as Abilities, Inc. and other developers of housing and supports for adults with disabilities, need to be pursued by all counties in order to expand the delivery of mobility to people with disabilities unable to directly access existing transit services.

In each region of the state, the funding relationships between counties and NGOs are often a function of historical precedent and whether transportation is a mission or a priority for the individual NGO chapter. That being said, all county coordinated systems need to develop relationships with key national and local NGOs that have a precedent for funding transportation in other parts of the state.

**Table 6 Local and NGO Funding Sources Used by
 NJ County Coordinated Transportation Systems**

<i>Program</i>	Local			NGOs		
	Fares	Donations	Municipalities	The Arc	Easter Seals	21 Plus
Atlantic		x				
Bergen		x				
Burlington	x	x				
Camden	x	x	x			
Cape May						
Cumberland		x				
Essex		x				
Gloucester		x				
Hudson						
Hunterdon	x	x		x		
Mercer		x				
Middlesex	x		x			
Monmouth	x	x	x	x		
Morris	x	x				
Ocean	x	x				x
Passaic		x	x		x	
Salem		x				
Somerset	x	x	x	x		
Sussex	x	x	x		x	
Union	x					
Warren	x	x		x		
Total	11	17	6	4	2	1

Conclusion

New Jersey’s county coordinated system providers rely on a variety of federal, state, and local sources to finance the administration, capital, and operational costs of providing transportation. While well provided for in the past by Casino Revenue funds, i.e. SCDRTAP, reliance on this one funding source is no longer a viable option. Some counties have responded to the challenge and have availed themselves of a large number of grant funding options from all levels of government and nonprofit sources. Others have been more reluctant or less skilled at accessing these other revenue sources.

On average, each county provider draws some portion of its funds from nine separate grant programs or funding streams. Those in active pursuit of grants and non-grant funding opportunities discussed here rely on up to 15 distinct revenue sources. In this age of reduced funding and increasing need, it behooves the county providers to consider all possible sources of funding and to replicate the efforts of their peers who have successfully been able to secure funding from additional sources.

CHAPTER FOUR KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

Introduction

From November 2010 through February 2011, the research team conducted a series of structured interviews with a variety of stakeholders in the New Jersey community transportation field, including but not limited to the 21 county transportation system providers. Also interviewed were: professional staff from NJ TRANSIT, the New Jersey Council on Special Transportation (NJ COST), two of the three Metropolitan Planning Organizations serving the state, and a New Jersey Transportation Management Association that provides numerous transportation services.

The primary purpose of the interviews was to discuss both existing and potentially new transportation funding opportunities for county transportation agencies as well as other innovations that agencies could pursue to maintain and/or expand their level of service (e.g. bus advertising, fare policies), particularly for New Jersey residents with disabilities seeking employment.

Specifically the intent of the meetings convened with the 21 county providers was to confirm information on their services and to seek insight on the financial challenges faced by each of these entities and how they endeavored to overcome them. The sessions also served to document the effects of funding reductions, including any negative impacts such as staffing reductions and service reduction and/or elimination. Finally, these sessions afforded participants the opportunity to discuss the unique regional and local issues they experienced in the current restricted economic environment.

A total of eight interview sessions were conducted allowing researchers to speak with 35 individuals from 26 organizations. The research team opted to convene interview sessions with the 21 counties that aligned with the NJ TRANSIT regional county organization structure. Thus, three sessions were held with counties – one each with counties in the northern region, the central region, and the southern region of the state. Also present at each of the three regional county meetings was that region's NJ TRANSIT regional program administrator. These personnel from the NJ TRANSIT local programs & minibuss support department work closely with county transportation providers and serve as a conduit of best practices to the latter. They also provide oversight and technical assistance support to the counties.

Members of the research team facilitated each interview session, which lasted from one to two hours, either in person or via telephone. Detailed individual interview reports for each of the eight interview sessions were prepared and included in the report appendix.

Table 7 Key Informant Interviews

Organization Interviewed	Date
NJ TRANSIT	11.5.10
New Jersey Council on Access and Specialized Transportation (NJ COST)	12.7.10
County Paratransit providers: Northern Region	
Bergen	Passaic
Essex	Sussex
Hudson	Warren
Morris	
Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC)	12.20.10
Meadowlink Transportation Management Association	1.5.11
County Paratransit providers: Southern Region	
Atlantic	Cumberland
Burlington	Gloucester
Camden	Salem
Cape May	
County Paratransit providers: Central Region	
Hunterdon	Ocean
Mercer	Somerset
Middlesex	Union
Monmouth	
North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority (NJTPA)	2.22.11

Summary of Interviews by Topic

County Transportation

An interview guide was used to facilitate each interview session. In addition, researchers posed certain targeted and unique questions to the 21 county providers, as presented in this section. County interview participants discussed details on their respective services, including employment trips for persons with disability.

The county systems, including both directly operated services and contracted operations, range in size from 12 peak vehicles in Salem County to 77 weekday peak vehicles in Somerset County. The median size of peak fleet is about 25 vehicles. Ten of the 21 counties operate all of their own vehicles; five counties (Burlington, Hunterdon, Salem, Union, and Warren) utilize contract vehicles exclusively while six counties operate a combination of in-house vehicles as well as those contracted from livery/taxi and bus companies. Of the solely contracted counties, the recent trend has been toward more local privately held companies and away from larger publicly held national and international private transportation firms.

To provide an order of magnitude for the operating budgets of the county coordinated system operations, the average operating budget for the majority of county providers was between \$2 and 3

million and ranged from about \$1 million to nearly \$7 million annually. Most county provided service between the hours of 7:00 AM to 5:00 PM. A third of the counties offered some service as early as 4:00 AM and as late as 10:00 PM. Most of these early and late services represented less than 20% of their peak vehicle fleets and were focused on employment and key life-sustaining medical services, particularly transportation for kidney dialysis treatments.

All 21 providers reported offering a mix of competitive and non-competitive employment trips for residents with disability. While most of the counties had provided some form of non-competitive employment transportation prior to 2000, transportation to competitive employment has grown since 1998 when New Jersey sponsored a study that was a precursor to the implementation of JARC funded projects in 1999. The Burlington County BurLink fixed route service, funded through a JARC grant, was specifically designed to address competitive employment transportation needs and until 2010 when service cuts were made, provided the highest number of competitive employment one-way passenger trips among the 21 counties.

Currently, interviewees explained that most employment trips were provided by subscription. Depending on the county, some of these employment trips are provided via deviated fixed route shuttles and others via demand response service. Not surprisingly, those counties with deviated fixed routes seem to be able to offer more employment trips for this targeted population compared to those counties that must rely on demand response service.

Robust shuttle services were discussed in the central region. Both Middlesex and Somerset Counties each offer seven shuttle routes, and Ocean County operates a 14 route shuttle service. Monmouth County operates a specific transportation service for persons with disability traveling to competitive employment called Brokered Employment Transportation Services (BETS) that serves about 13,000 persons annually and Ocean County provides transportation for about 40 persons to competitive employment with their Disabled Employment Transportation Service (DETS). More rural Sussex County located in the northern region of the state explained that while they do have a shuttle service designed for commuters, it has been experiencing low ridership. They believe the low ridership is a result of the high unemployment rate due to the recession and local business downsizing, which has eliminated job opportunities in the area.

Some counties discussed coordinating with other entities to provide employment trips. For example, Gloucester County in the southern region of the state operates a deviated fixed route in coordination with the South Jersey Transportation Authority (SJTA), which provides weekday service to the Pureland Industrial Complex in Bridgeport. In the northern region of the state, Meadowlink TMA operates several shuttle services for Essex County that can be used by persons with disability for employment trips including the Essex County WAVE shuttle, the Night Owl, the Fairfield-West Caldwell shuttle and the Route 10 shuttle. With regard to transportation to non-competitive employment, such as sheltered workshops, some counties provide contracted service to these sites, including Hunterdon, Monmouth, Ocean, Somerset, and Warren counties.

Despite a lack of robust shuttle services in some counties, it must be emphasized that all counties interviewed expressed interest, dedication, and commitment to trying to offer employment trips to person with disability and other transportation disadvantaged populations.

The responses from county providers varied when asked about overall unmet service needs. Many providers from the central region emphasized the strain medical trips placed on their services while

Somerset County mentioned difficulty meeting employment trips. Essex and Morris counties located in the northern region of the state mentioned dialysis trips specifically, while Hudson County cited the lack of east-west travel options. Others in the northern region described their unmet need in terms of service hours and not trip purpose. This is not surprising since no northern or southern county reported providing weekend employment service. Only some central counties offer limited Saturday service with their shuttle routes. As a result of these limited service hours, commuters often do not have a viable return trip at the conclusion of their work day and/or cannot access employment on weekends at all. Some providers noted that particular employment sectors, such as retail, poses unique challenges because retail work typically requires evening and weekend work hours. County providers also reported employment trips for shift workers as an unmet need. Cape May County in the southern region also cited limited service hours as an unmet need, while other southern counties explained their unmet needs were “across the board”, with medical, employment, and shopping trips all difficult to provide. This is one of the strengths of a service such as EZRide, operated by Meadowlink TMA in the northern part of the state, which provides services covering second and third shifts on weekdays and weekends.

As presented earlier in the report, most county transportation service does not exceed five miles beyond a given county’s geographic border. County interviewees were asked if they exceed that predetermined limit. Those who responded affirmatively indicated they do so only for medical trips. Not surprisingly, counties in more rural areas of the state noted traveling relatively far beyond the five mile boundary in order to access certain medical facilities. For example, Salem County mentioned traveling up to 50 miles beyond the county for medical needs and Cape May County reported traveling up to 100 miles. In fact, both Cape May and Cumberland County noted they travel into the neighboring states of Delaware and Pennsylvania for medical trips if needed.

Counties also discussed the topic of regional/local issues they considered unique in comparison to what some of their peer agencies from other counties experience. Most comments in this regard were shared by the more rural counties, including Atlantic, Cumberland, Cape May, and Salem in the southern region and Hunterdon, Sussex, and Warren counties in the northern region. Some of these rural counties have limited or no public transit service available so they are not easily able to pursue strategies such as transit feeder service. Some explained that due to this limited exposure to public transportation, residents of these more rural counties often object to efficiency inducing practices, such as shared rides and feeder services.

General Discussion on Funding

As New Jersey’s statewide transportation agency and close collaborator with the 21 county transportation providers, NJ TRANSIT explained that the current funding dilemma is being experienced by all counties, as well as other transportation agencies, including community transportation providers such as Meadowlink TMA. Aside from being negatively impacted by the general nationwide economic recession, almost all county providers reported relying heavily on New Jersey casino revenue funding via the SCDRTAP program, which has experienced significant reductions as detailed earlier in the report due to factors including neighboring state gambling competition. It was widely acknowledged that the 2010 increase in the funding formula allotted to transportation through the state SCDRTAP fund from a 7.5 percent share to 8.5 percent has done little to improve the economic stability of community providers, especially because the source of these funds, casino revenue, continues to plummet. As one participant explained, the historic county

transportation provider business model of relying on New Jersey casino revenue funds to support county transportation is broken.

This existing economic environment has negatively impacted county providers, and limited their ability to maintain existing operations, expand existing programs, and initiate new transportation services. County providers interviewed explained that their county freeholders cannot fill the budget gaps they have and will continue to experience. Escalating costs associated with fuel and other service elements have only compounded what was described as a funding crisis. It was suggested that many county agencies will not experience the full impact of the funding dilemma until 2013 and if funding continues to decrease, issues that have not previously been addressed will need to be managed, such as how to better integrate services. Concern was also expressed that funding from federal sources including FTA Section 5307, Section 5311, and the Older Americans Act are expected to decrease based on Census 2010 figures.

All interviewees discussed the effects of the funding crisis on county transportation providers. As several reported, some counties have considered using customer income as a determinant for service eligibility, which has not previously been done. Other counties have denied rides, but the extent to which this practice has occurred is unknown, as some county governments will not permit the sharing of these data. County providers have responded to funding reductions in a variety of ways. The most frequently cited actions are listed below, however not all providers have experienced and/or pursued all of these mechanisms:

- Service reduction and prioritization – particularly with regard to destinations, hours, trip purposes, and service categories. As to trip prioritization, one interviewee noted that employment trips are rarely considered paramount compared to medical and nutritional trip needs. As to service categories, some counties have reduced demand response service and/or eliminated specific shuttle routes;
- Staff reduction;
- Proliferation of waiting lists for trips, including those for dialysis and employment;
- Trip denials;
- Reduced ability to secure match funds often required for grant programs;
- Reduction in applications received by state MPOs and NJ TRANSIT for grant programs requiring match funds; and
- Delayed capital replacement plans, including aging vehicles. Some providers are not even accepting donated vehicles because they cannot assume the maintenance costs.

To ameliorate the effects of reduced funding and to preserve and improve their services, county providers uniformly agreed they must pursue new and diversified funding opportunities. However, county and other community transit providers have encountered one significant obstacle to achieving these goals – the need to secure match funds that are frequently required by federal and other grant programs. For example, it was reported that some JARC program recipients have lost their match source. This poses a significant concern as JARC funding requires a 50/50 match for operating expenses and 80/20 for capital expenses.

Currently, counties are rarely able to provide the necessary match funds, especially if a cash match is required. It was remarked that a match in excess of ten percent is now very difficult for any county provider agency to cover and agencies like NJ TRANSIT and NJTPA do not have funds available to help meet the match. Further, many other matching fund options for grants have been eliminated. For example, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funds had been eligible for match funds but are no longer available. The New Jersey Transportation Innovation Fund (TIF) has also been used to support JARC, but that support will not be available post-2012. This inability to secure match funds has resulted in counties choosing not to apply for grants requiring a match, which often results in unspent federal dollars being left on the table. Meadowlink TMA advised that building diverse partnerships is an important component of being successful in securing match funds.

While there are myriad reasons why counties have not pursued new funding sources including unfamiliarity with potential resources or an inability to meet match requirements, in other cases they have bypassed certain programs for fear they will be unable to sustain programs with that have prescribed time limits, such as CMAQ's three year funding structure. In other cases, providers expressed weariness with complying with funding regulations associated with a given program, such as non-allowance for trip prioritization.

Some and/or all county interviewees reported using the following funding programs including: FTA Sec 5310; Sec 5311; Sec 5316 (JARC); Sec 5317 (New Freedom); CMAQ; Older Americans Act Title III; Social Service Block Grants; and NJ Department of Military and Veterans Affairs. The providers conveyed that flat funding associated with some of these sources was a problem. Less commonly cited funding sources included Ryan White funding, which is used by Monmouth and Middlesex counties. Cumberland County reported receiving Section 5307 funding support. Meadowlink TMA reported receiving corporate funds as well as foundation support.

Finally, county participants were asked if and how the federal United We Ride (UWR) movement had assisted them in coping with the economic environment. Several expressed that the UWR effort had not helped to alleviate the existing financial crisis and had offered no funding to address unmet needs. Others noted however that UWR had offered a means to identify unmet needs and had encouraged the development and expansion of valuable service coordination.

Coping Strategies

How well a given county transportation entity handled the economic downturn depends on a variety of factors. For example, the personality of the service director or level of freeholder commitment to a given county's transportation program often determines willingness to experiment with innovative ways to raise funds and to reduce costs, such as bus advertising and travel training. Interviewees discussed numerous coping strategies – related to both funding and operations – being considered and/or utilized by New Jersey county transportation providers. It was agreed among all that no single strategy discussed below would completely alleviate the economic duress county providers have experienced; instead, it was acknowledged success would only be realized by pursuing multiple coping strategies. Further, reliance on defensive strategies, such as shifting funds formerly directed to capital expenses to support operations, only offers a short term solution to the general funding dilemma.

Bus Advertising

Non-county interviewees generally agreed selling bus advertising rights was an option worth considering, although most agreed it was “not a silver bullet” solution. Further, it was acknowledged that bus advertising was not appropriate in all locations, as it is more difficult to interest advertisers in more rural areas that lack a dense population base. Middlesex County reported success in using bus advertising to generate additional revenue, earning more than \$60,000 from lucrative bus wraps in 2011-12. However, other county interviewees who have undertaken this endeavor have not had any success with bus advertising thus far. In fact, several counties in each of the three regions reported receiving no response to their requests for proposal for advertising. Some opined the difficulty with pursuing bus advertising is due to market saturation. Notwithstanding this opinion, two counties (Mercer and Cumberland) did obtain third party advertising contracts and a fourth (Atlantic) accepted a bid from a national advertising brokerage firm.

Purchase of Bus and Rail Tickets and Passes

Some county providers have opted to purchase and distribute transit tickets to their customers to encourage public transit system usage, including Monmouth and Middlesex counties. No providers in the southern region mentioned pursuing this strategy. In the northern region no interviewee reported their agency purchases the tickets directly, but Passaic and Morris explained their respective office of temporary assistance does purchase and distribute transit passes. For counties with limited or no NJ TRANSIT bus and/or rail service, such as Hunterdon, Sussex, and Warren counties, purchasing and distributing transit tickets to county customers is not a viable option.

Some NJ TRANSIT interviewees explained that this potentially cost savings approach has not been actively pursued by most counties in part because some agencies operate under a human services mindset and do not often consider the potential benefits of integrating their services with traditional transit. That said, it was emphasized that promoting this approach is feasible as the NJT system is very accessible for persons with disabilities – all buses are accessible, most light rail stations are accessible and over 70 rail stations are accessible. DVRPC agreed that purchasing transit tickets can be a sound approach for counties to consider, but they noted some funding streams do not permit such action. Overall, it was emphasized by interviewees that if this approach were to be pursued, supporting travel training efforts would be paramount and would serve to encourage traditional transit usage.

Fares and Donations

All interviewees shared opinions on fare and donations. It was stressed that the politics surrounding this issue cannot be ignored. In many cases county freeholders have been reluctant to permit fares due to a concern that such action would anger older residents who utilize the service. However, many acknowledged that county residents appreciate and value the service and are often willing to pay. NJ TRANSIT explained that surveys conducted in the southern region of the state demonstrated that respondents are indeed willing to pay for services.

At the time of the interviews, both Cape May and Hudson indicated they had neither a donation nor a fare policy. Union indicated they had a fare only policy. Atlantic, Bergen, Cumberland, Essex, Gloucester, Mercer, Passaic, and Salem reported having a donation policy only. Burlington, Camden, Hunterdon, Middlesex, Monmouth, Morris, Ocean, Somerset, Sussex, and Warren reported having both donation and fare policies. For example, Burlington reported using a fare on their fixed route

BurLink shuttles and a non-mandatory cost share on their other services. Camden charges a fare based on NJ TRANSIT zone fares for private employment trips. A fare is also charged for dialysis trips if the customer selects a facility that is not the closest one to their residence. A cost share is requested for other trips. Camden explained they have been seeking county approval to charge a fare for other non-emergency medical transportation but thus far those efforts have not been realized.

Table 8 Use of Fare and Donation Policies by County

No Fare or Donation Policy	Fare Policy Only	Donation Policy Only		Fare and Donation Policy	
Cape May	Union	Atlantic	Gloucester	Burlington	Morris
Hudson		Bergen	Mercer	Camden	Ocean
		Cumberland	Passaic	Hunterdon	Somerset
		Essex	Salem	Middlesex	Sussex
				Monmouth	Warren

One key issue for counties was coping with the ability to pay on the part of very low-income persons. While six counties offered a reduced fare for senior citizens over aged 60 and people with disabilities of any age relative to their general public fares (Atlantic, Gloucester, Middlesex, Ocean, Sussex, and Warren), seven counties also provided a fare waiver application (Camden, Middlesex, Monmouth, Morris, Ocean, Sussex, and Union).

County providers have had success with their fare and/or donation programs. Burlington County’s provider, BurLink, increased their fare from one dollar to two dollars each way in March 2010. Despite the increase, BurLink experienced a subsequent increase in ridership. Camden also increased their donation request from one dollar to two dollars, which generated increased revenue and produced about \$20,000 in additional funds. Somerset County reported that their fare revenue helps to cover the costs of several program drivers. Meadowlink TMA explained they use fares successfully and have avoided donation policies as they feel they are arbitrary. Another interviewee reported that fares helped to reduce the incidence of customer no shows.

Several suggestions were offered for counties interested in adopting or changing donation and/or fare policies. NJ TRANSIT advised that if a fare policy is to be implemented, the policy should be simple, with the same fare applying to all customers. Monmouth County suggested that all systems should charge for rides either as a percent of the cost of the ride or a fare comparable to what NJT Access Link would charge for the ride. NJ COST interviewees noted that the aggressiveness of the county transportation coordinator is often a critical element for successful fare and/or donation policy implementation. They added that the method of fare or donation payment can affect success as well. For example, Union County spends significant administrative funds billing riders via costly mailings. In contrast, using fare boxes onboard vehicles (Middlesex County) is more cost efficient, but can pose other concerns, such as absorbing the administrative costs associated with revenue counting and deposit. Another potential benefit of using an onboard farebox is the potential to collect more donations, as experienced by the five counties that utilize this fare collection method – Cumberland, Mercer, Morris, Passaic, and Warren. These counties have seen a more than doubling of their donation/suggested fare revenue since implementing onboard collection.

Finally, it was reported that when pursuing a donation policy, nomenclature used for marketing materials is an important determinant of compliance. For example, instead of requesting a “donation”, terms such as “co-pay” or “cost share” should be employed.

New Funding Sources

All counties acknowledged the need to identify new funding sources and most indicated they have been focusing efforts to do so. Mercer County reported successfully pursuing Section 5311 Non-urban Rural Grant funds for the first time in 2011. In some instances counties have targeted new funding sources to support vehicle replacement and have used their remaining casino funds to support operations. Several interviewees cited the main concern when seeking new funding was that grants most often request the creation of a new service and the counties need to focus on maintaining their existing services.

Some counties reported seeking new funding from private funding sources, such as nonprofits. For example, Middlesex and Union counties both mentioned pursuing funding support from the private, nonprofit Henry H. Kessler Foundation, which offers grant opportunities to increase employment outcomes for people with disability. Meadowlink TMA sought and received funding from the Henry H. Kessler Foundation to design and pilot their Flex-T service, which is targeted toward meeting the employment transportation needs of persons with disability.

NJ TRANSIT explained that counties that are not connected to their local Metropolitan Planning Organizations are often not aware of how to pursue federal funding opportunities such as the CMAQ program. United We Ride efforts have helped to improve working relations in this regard. Bergen County mentioned their pursuit and usage of CMAQ funding has allowed them to create a shuttle service from the Ridgewood train station to an office park that has opened up employment opportunities for low-income persons with disability in the county. As CMAQ funding has a three year period, Bergen is working to develop partnerships with office park businesses in the hope that the latter agree to maintain the service post-CMAQ funding.

Other non-traditional sources that have been sought include corporate community support from local food stores and area businesses that either serve as employers of county residents and/or benefit from county customers patronizing their business. It was suggested that counties interested in pursuing funding support from shopping facilities should direct their request to the community relations/corporate office of such entities. NJ COST raised the topic of seeking corporate/private sponsorship from sources such as dialysis centers to support county transportation, but due to concerns involving unclear federal anti-kickback law regulations, there is currently no mechanism in place for such action.

Partnering with Other Agencies

There was much discussion about partnering and coordinating with other agencies as a coping strategy. Many interviewees emphasized the potential obstacles and issues to be resolved when partnering, particularly in vehicle sharing. DVRPC acknowledged that coordination among agencies can be a monumental task to achieve, especially when working with large entities that have complex organizational/administrative infrastructures. In short, the scale of a given operation can be a significant factor in promoting or inhibiting coordination efforts.

NJ COST interviewees indicated there are few successful examples of agencies/entities sharing vehicles/services. As one interviewee summarized, “liking an idea and having it work are two

different things.” Opposition to vehicle sharing includes concerns about how to address the failure of one partner to provide one segment of the trip (e.g. no show; late or early arrival). The potential for this type of problem often causes concern and considerable stress among riders. Issues such as vehicle size and wheelchair capacity need to be considered when seeking to share services. A related concern involves insurance issues associated with sharing of vehicles.

Due to these potential obstacles and others, DVRPC reported that pursuing a coordination effort as a pilot study is a smart approach, since pilot efforts are generally less intimidating to providers. In addition, interviewees emphasized that the concept of coordination is abstract and elusive to many persons, so that agencies should determine specific and tangible strategies when pursuing such an undertaking. NJTPA added that to help facilitate coordination among service providers, it would be useful to encourage a coordinated mapping effort that would lay out details on vehicle fleets, service hours in use, service territory covered, etc.

DVRPC shared information on the ongoing coordination efforts between The Arc, NJ TRANSIT Access Link, and Gloucester County paratransit to reduce service duplication to a specific sheltered workshop site. These three providers are working together on a pilot effort to identify overlap in their respective services so that customers can be redistributed when feasible. Improving services in this regard could positively affect service features including reliability and yield cost savings. Potential barriers to this coordination effort have been identified and solutions are being sought. For example, ARC clients typically ride in a van with a driver who is certified in CPR so this issue had to be discussed among all three providers.

Despite evidence of the inherent difficulties in coordination, interviewees shared success stories. Several reported having service contracts with local or nonprofit entities. For example, Somerset County receives support for services from The Arc, some local adult day centers, and from several municipalities. Monmouth County receives funds from The Arc, a center for vocational rehabilitation and from some dialysis centers and municipalities. Hunterdon also receives funds from their local Arc and The Arc of Mercer provides the non-competitive employment trips in the county. Ocean County receives funding from 21 Plus, which provides support to persons with developmental disability. Mercer County also noted they are attempting to coordinate with a local nonprofit to assist with transporting dialysis patients currently on the transportation waitlist. Finally, Sussex County mentioned securing a small grant to provide services to a private, nonprofit organization and Morris County offers subscription service to some nonprofits.

Hunterdon, Middlesex, Monmouth, and Somerset counties reported maintaining purchase of service contracts with the NJ Department of Vocational Rehabilitation Services. Eighteen of the twenty-one counties have contracts with the NJ Department of Veteran and Military Affairs. As these are often long standing contracts between state agencies and county providers with finite funding availability, it may be difficult for the three remaining counties (Hunterdon, Sussex, and Essex) to be able to enter into these kinds of relationships.

Several counties also mentioned partnering with one another. For example, Union County noted partnering with Morris County and Hunterdon County has considered partnering with Warren County to facilitate transfers. Somerset and Middlesex Counties also partner with one another on a limited basis. Cumberland County reported they would like to discuss the potential of partnering with other local counties, such as Camden and Gloucester, as a means to reduce duplicate trips. Specific examples of partnerships include Camden and Gloucester counties that have determined a

common transfer point and share vehicles that travel to medical appointment in Philadelphia; Mercer and Middlesex counties have determined transfer points and share vehicles to VA hospitals in Basking Ridge and East Orange; and Middlesex and Union counties offer connecting bus service at JFK Medical Center in Edison and Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital in New Brunswick.

Camden County discussed partnering with local municipalities to sell transportation services to them for trips such as shopping. It was explained this is a “win-win” strategy as the arrangement provides needed revenue to the county, while helping municipalities meet the transportation needs of their residents without having to purchase and maintain costly vehicles. Camden County has the equipment and capacity to provide these services, as well as the expertise in scheduling and operations. Some interviewees remarked that this strategy could not work in their county as there are no existing local services that could pay the county to take over providing said service. Gloucester added that many municipalities that provide transportation services do not want to relinquish their role.

As detailed earlier in this report, New Jersey transitioned to a statewide Medicaid brokerage system with LogistiCare in spring 2010. Several counties offered that they were either under contract to provide services for LogistiCare or interested in exploring how doing so could yield revenue. Middlesex County emphasized that partnering with LogistiCare offers counties the opportunity to raise funds while providing only those Medicaid trips that make the most sense for their operations. Union and Sussex counties indicated they would be partnering with LogistiCare in the immediate future and counties including Hudson and Hunterdon expressed interest as well. However, a few counties reported no interest in partnering due to the reimbursement rate LogistiCare offers partners. Gloucester County explained that they have been negatively impacted by the state’s decision to utilize a Medicaid transportation broker because Gloucester County previously provided all Medicaid brokerage and transport services in their county and have now lost that revenue source.

NJTPA spoke about the value that county providers could gain by reaching out to their respective TMA to explore partnering opportunities, especially because many TMAs are engaged in either providing transportation services and/or facilitating mobility management strategies. Several participants, including Middlesex, Monmouth, and Gloucester also discussed the potential benefits to counties partnering more closely with NJ TRANSIT’s Access Link service when feasible.

Finally, Meadowlink TMA advised potential collaborators to not become discouraged when initial obstacles arise in the partnering process. For example, the Flex-T service designed to provide employment transportation to persons with disability was originally intended to be piloted in Passaic County. However, Meadowlink had difficulty securing the needed support from partner entities so Meadowlink identified new partners for the initiative, which resulted in the selection of a new county for the pilot. This experience demonstrates the potential difficulties in partnering with other agencies. However, although partnering can be difficult, it proved successful with the Flex-T program once a new site and new implementation partners were selected.

Volunteer Drivers

Several interviewees discussed the use of volunteer drivers. Hunterdon County reported they have an active volunteer driver program with 17 drivers that provide medical trips using county vehicles. Meadowlink TMA also reported using volunteer drivers to support several of their programs,

including the Flex-T employment program for persons with disability and the Community Cars program for the elderly. Meadowlink explained that use of volunteer drivers helps to keep the fares low for customers. Camden County noted they would like to pursue a volunteer driver program. NJ TRANSIT interviewees remarked on the benefit of volunteer drivers for ride matching programs and also cited potential cost savings associated with use of their service.

NJ COST mentioned potential obstacles with driver unions as a concern when seeking to use volunteer drivers in addition to paid drivers. Determining the appropriate and necessary insurance coverage needed for volunteer drivers was also discussed not so much as a limitation, but rather as a critical consideration organizations must resolve before using volunteer drivers.

Improve Efficiencies

Focusing on improving efficiencies is another strategy that can help county providers cope better with the economic environment. Meadowlink TMA has embraced technology as one way to improve efficiencies. They have standardized their vehicle fleet with regard to vehicle manufacturer and model. All vehicles have GPS, mobile data computers, and in-vehicle video surveillance. They sought and received federal Sec 5310 funding to purchase software that will facilitate online scheduling and dispatch. Morris County also noted pursuing grants opportunities that can help them expand their technological capabilities. It was remarked these tools may assist the county in coordinating with local dial-a-ride service providers. NJ TRANSIT also mentioned the benefit of utilizing routing and scheduling software as a means to improve efficiencies and overall productivity.

Other strategies to improve efficiencies that were discussed specifically by the counties included eliminating all non-essential spending; reducing driver overtime; and learning how to serve as mobility managers to their customer base, effectively helping customers determine the best strategies, including mass transit, to reach their desired destinations. Lastly, it was remarked that many counties are considering implementing or enforcing their current no-show policies. For example, Warren County has educated their customer base on their no show policy and have reduced their no-shows significantly. Sussex has also experienced success in enforcing their no-show policy, reducing their no-shows by 85 percent.

Transit Feeder Service

As NJ COST interviewees explained, feeder service is a valuable option to pursue in counties with transit service. It was noted that travel training for the customer base is needed, however, if this approach is to succeed. NJ TRANSIT interviewees reported that Access Link is conducting a limited pilot that involves giving passengers a free ride on Access Link if they link up with traditional transit on their journey. They added that if two agencies are seeking to create a feeder service arrangement they must think of it as a form of coordination and determine how to address any issues related to their respective fare policies first, as well as other service components such as trip type, e.g. curb-to-curb, door-to-door, etc.

All county providers from the central region reported they provide and support transit feeder service as feasible. Middlesex and Somerset counties have optimized some of their deviated fixed route shuttle services to connect with NJT bus stops and rail stations. In the southern region, participants reported they would gladly offer feeder service but customers rarely request it. Camden and Cape May both indicated they offer feeder service. Burlington County's deviated fixed route

service, BurLink, connects with NJ TRANSIT buses and with the RiverLINE light rail stations. Finally, in the northern region, Passaic and Essex mentioned the transportation services offered by Meadowlink in their respective counties strive to connect to transit when feasible. Morris noted their Morris on the Move shuttle offers many transfer points and connects with NJT bus stops and rail stations. Sussex operates a New Freedom funded, on-request shuttle service that connects to the Newton park-and-ride and the Netcong train station. Warren mentioned working to connect to the NJ TRANSIT loop in Phillipsburg.

In total, interviewees using transit feeder service opined this approach offers a valuable means to expand service areas and options for customers, while providing cost efficiencies to service providers.

Deviated Fixed Routes/Shuttles

Deviated fixed routes/shuttles provide an excellent way to serve important local and regional trip generators, including employment sites, and often contribute to reduced costs. All county providers in the central region reported using deviated fixed route shuttle services and experiencing success with this type of service. Several counties in the southern region also use deviated fixed routes/shuttles, including Burlington County with the six route BurLink service and in the north, Warren, Sussex, and Essex (via their contract with Meadowlink) offer deviated fixed route service. NJ COST emphasized that a key factor in creating a successful deviated fixed route service relates to the route planning process. Specifically, the target customer base for the service must be the main consideration so that important trip generators are included in the route, such as housing complexes, work sites, medical centers, etc.

Other Suggestions

The 35 individuals interviewed for this study mentioned a variety of other innovative potential coping strategies that either counties or other stakeholders in the community transportation sector such as NJ TRANSIT could explore. Many are original in their own right and are described below.

- Continue the communication and coordination effort that was initiated through the United We Ride process. Counties should strive to be engaged with their local MPO and county planning department so as to become aware of potential funding opportunities and to potentially receive some grant writing assistance. Counties should also maintain the stakeholder groups they convened for the United We Ride process as one means to improve coordination. It was added that those counties who have continued to focus on United We Ride partnerships and their county coordinated plans are making the most progress with regard to coordination efforts.
- Investigate how to offer more travel training opportunities to consumers, as travel training offers an excellent approach to teaching transportation disadvantaged persons how to safely use transit without fear. It was acknowledged that if more consumers felt comfortable using public transit and county shuttles, fewer would request costly demand response services. NJ TRANSIT's Access Link program has done a valuable service in supporting travel training and informing Access Link applicants about travel training opportunities with NJ TIP Inc. Middlesex County in collaboration with NJ TIP Inc. also has offered small group travel training via a program called MCTIP to area seniors and persons with disability.

- Consider regionalization of services as a means to maximize capacity and to address the county border dilemma.
- Evaluate the potential benefits and drawbacks of county transportation agencies becoming nonprofit entities. Such a change would make them eligible for private donations but would make them ineligible for some other types of funding support. For example, Camden County's transportation service currently operates as a nonprofit and is subject to costly federal and state fuel taxes.
- Consider the benefits that could be derived from county providers entering into purchasing consortiums for expenses including fuel, vehicles, and insurance. For example, counties can buy tax exempt fuel (except for Camden County) and if they are using private or nonprofit contractors, there is a price advantage to providing the fuel to the contractor at cost.
- Assess whether increased funding for NJ TRANSIT's Access Link service might permit service coverage for more of the state, which would help alleviate the current demand on county transportation.
- Investigate the possibility of counties sharing vehicles owned by nonprofit and other agencies that do not use their vehicles regularly.
- Eliminate the county border as an artificial service boundary. Trips to other counties should be permitted with a mandatory fare in place. Transfer trips should be pursued with other counties and NJT Access Link service to facilitate border elimination.
- Develop and replicate a training program to better support junior county staff as senior level county transportation providers retire. Such action will help preserve institutional knowledge and improve overall operations.

Conclusion

The interview sessions convened for this study yielded important insights and valuable information for the research team related to how the current economic and funding environment has negatively affected county transportation and other community transit providers who seek to maintain and, in some cases, expand their transportation services. New potential funding sources were discussed, as were innovative coping strategies county providers have considered and/or are pursuing to combat reduced funding from traditional sources, including state casino revenue. County providers also shared some of the unique regional and local issues they have experienced in the current restricted economic environment. All of the findings shared through the interview process were extremely useful in the development of the policy recommendations included in Chapter 7.

The stakeholders interviewed, including the 21 county transportation providers, expressed dedication to continuing to meet the transportation needs of their transportation disadvantaged consumers to the best of their ability. However, for that goal to be achieved, interviewees recognize they must be open to pursuing a multitude of coping strategies and must cease reliance on formerly predictable funding sources. However, the group warned that even if many of the innovations named in these discussions are pursued, the reality remains that a new funding stream dedicated to county paratransit must be implemented if they are to meet the ever increasing demand for services, including employment trips.

CHAPTER FIVE

NATIONAL SURVEY OF COMMUNITY PARATRANSIT PROVIDERS & BEST PRACTICES FOR PROVIDING TRANSPORTATION FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Introduction

Innovation is quietly happening within the community transportation industry. By exploring new sources of funding, using new technology, and streamlining service design, community transit agencies have been improving the delivery of mobility services to persons with disabilities and other transportation disadvantaged populations. These innovative practices enable agencies to make better use of limited resources and permit the redeployment of some of these resources to allow for the expansion of services including those intended for people with disabilities. While in some cases the innovation may not directly serve people with disabilities going to employment destinations, the use of these practices allows agencies to redeploy resources and to expand services including those serving people with disabilities seeking to access employment.

A National Survey of Paratransit Providers

The VTC research team developed and administered a confidential, online survey that was fielded to a nationwide sample of community paratransit providers. Researchers designed the survey to capture the experiences, insights, and strategies used by respondent organizations to maintain and enhance services for the transportation disadvantaged, including people with disabilities. A main goal of the effort was to identify innovative strategies employed by these organizations. The survey was pretested in late 2010 and early 2011. The finalized survey was fielded during a seven-month period beginning in March 2011.

To obtain the desired sample of public and private paratransit providers, the research team culled a membership directory shared by the Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA). Other sorts of providers and stakeholders, such as taxi companies, manufacturers, and other mobility-related organizations were omitted from the sample. An email invitation requesting survey completion was directed to 817 persons, usually the community transit agency manager or director. Organizations represented include local public paratransit agencies (e.g. municipal, county), the ADA paratransit division of public transit agencies, private nonprofit and for-profit entities providing paratransit services, and other public agencies offering paratransit. Follow-up occurred one month following the initial solicitation. Notice of the survey was also included in the online CTAA newsletter, *Fast Mail*, which is distributed to community transportation stakeholders nationwide. Finally, researchers disseminated the survey to community paratransit organizations known through professional contacts. In total, 186 respondents completed the survey. It is not possible to calculate a response rate as the total number of individuals receiving an invitation to take the survey is not known.

Survey Respondent Characteristics

As presented in Table 9, public agency participation was well-balanced among municipal (23%), county (22%), and other levels of government (21%), while only a small share of respondents

indicated a state government association (4%). Other respondent agencies self-identified as private, nonprofit human services organizations (12%) or transportation companies (11%), private for-profit transportation companies (6%), or educational organizations (2%).

Respondents were asked if they operated in urban, suburban, rural or a mixed setting. This inquiry and its follow up indicated the majority operated at least in part in rural settings (68%), while 44% of agencies provided some of their service in urban settings. About a quarter of agencies operated in suburban settings (23%). More than half of all respondent agencies operated fewer than 25 vehicles (53%), and 89% of agencies operated fewer than 100 vehicles.

Most respondents reported their agency served people with disabilities (73%) and the elderly (71%). Most also transported the general public (64%) or welfare recipients/low-income persons (62%). Nearly all agencies received some form of compensation from their riders. Most respondents (79%) reported they charged a fare for services while only 20% requested a rider donation in lieu of fare. For those agencies that charged a fare, on average it accounted for 13% of annual operating revenue. The average fare charged was \$1.75, though responses ranged from a low of 50 cents to a high of five dollars.

Table 9 Respondent Characteristics

	VTC Survey
Organization Type	
Municipal government	23%
County government	22%
Other public agency	21%
Private, nonprofit human services organization	12%
Private, nonprofit transportation company	11%
Private, for-profit transportation company	6%
State government	4%
Educational institution	2%
Other private organization	1%
N	179
Service Area	
Rural	68%
Urban	44%
Suburban	23%
N *	171
Fleet Size	
0 to 25	53%
26 to 100	36%
101 to 250	7%
251 to 500	1%
More than 500	3%
N	140
Types of Trips Provided	
Demand responsive	90%
Subscription trips	58%
Fixed route	41%
Deviated fixed route	40%
On demand	27%
N*	146
Annual One Way Passenger Trips (2010)	
Less than 25,000	11%
25,000 to 50,000	11%
50,000 to 100,000	17%
100,000 to 250,000	30%
250,000 to 500,000	13%
500,000 to 1,000,000	7%
1,000,000 to 2,500,000	6%
2,500,000 to 5,000,000	3%
5,000,000 or more	2%
N	127

**Percentages do not add to 100% because of multiple responses by some respondents*

Meeting the Transportation Needs of Persons with Disabilities Seeking Employment

A central tenet of the survey was to evaluate the extent to which community providers have been satisfying the needs of their clientele, particularly persons with disabilities seeking employment. Over 85% of survey respondents reported providing transportation to employment for persons with disabilities. Respondents were asked to rank the top three most requested trip purposes by using an ordinal scale (with one representing the most requested, two the next most requested, etc.). The results are shown in Table 10. The first column (labeled count) shows the number of respondents identifying a trip purpose as one of the top three most requested and the table also shows the number of respondents who ranked each trip purpose as first, second, and third. The ranks were converted to an aggregate score by first multiplying the first ranked responses by three, the second ranked responses by two, and the third ranked responses by one, and then aggregating the products for each feature. In the last column, the aggregate scores are shown in relation to the least requested trip purpose (recreation).

One can see from the results in Table 10 that the sequence of the most requested trip purposes with regard to the total number of respondents identifying each as most requested (column one) is identical to the aggregate scores obtained from the ranks. Both the counts and the rank aggregates demonstrate that medical trips are the most requested, followed by employment trips. In all, Table 2 demonstrates that medical and employment trips are requested far more compared to other trip purposes listed in the table.

Table 10 Trip Destination, Ranked Analysis

	Count	Percent	Rank 1	Rank 2	Rank 3	Aggregate score	Indexed to least
Medical (excluding dialysis)	104	28%	53	33	18	243	24
Employment	84	22%	36	23	25	179	18
Shopping/personal errands	73	19%	12	29	32	126	13
Dialysis center	44	12%	7	18	19	76	8
Education	27	7%	9	9	9	54	5
Nutrition center	19	5%	2	7	10	30	3
Adult day care	10	3%	5	2	3	22	2
Recreation	7	2%	1	1	5	10	1
Other	8	2%	0	3	5	11	NA
Total	376	100%	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA

While providing a large number of trips to employment locations, agencies also stated they had not satisfied the needs that exist for employment trips. Agencies named employment trips (and/or job training) as their largest unmet need that they would like to fulfill, with nearly four in ten survey respondents indicating that employment trips were their largest unmet need (37%). Being able to address this need may be difficult however if agencies are not able to expand service, particularly the times when service is available. For customers trying to reach a workplace, being able to use

community transportation is predicated on having that service available when, as well as where, they need it. While riders traveling to non-competitive employment locations *might be* satisfied with limited hours, those seeking competitive employment could be severely hampered by these restrictions. Agencies also cited trips for personal errands (13%) and medical purposes (12%) as needs that remained unfulfilled.

More than half of respondent agencies stated that the rides they provide to employment served both competitive and non-competitive work locations equally (56%). Only 12% provided trips only to non-competitive employment and 32% transported riders to competitive workplaces only.

As most trips provided were to competitive workplaces, it begs the question whether riders were able to travel to jobs outside the usual commuting times. Whether providers were able to satisfy the needs of these workers is especially important, as perhaps more than other populations, people with disabilities frequently work in industries such as retail and warehousing with work hours outside a typical 9-to-5 schedule. Almost all survey respondents who provided employment transportation for persons with disabilities reported they provided weekday service, while only slightly more than half offered these services on weekends. Findings show that employment weekday service hours were generally better than weekend hours and early morning service more readily available than service in the evening. One in five survey respondents provided service before 6 AM on weekdays and 69% provided service before 7 AM on weekdays. On the weekend, one in five providers began service by 6 AM while half start service by 7 AM. However evening service was much less prevalent and would present a challenge for riders needing to return from second shift or evening shifts common in retail. Half of all survey respondents end service before 6 PM on weekdays (55%) and about half do before 6 PM on weekends (46%).

**Table 11 AM and PM Employment
Transportation Service Hours**

Earliest pickup	Weekday	Weekend
Before 6 am	21%	22%
6-7 am	48%	28%
7-8 am	22%	22%
8-9 am	8%	18%
9-10 am	1%	8%
After 10 am	1%	2%
	100%	100%
Latest pickup	Weekday	Weekend
Before 6 pm	55%	46%
6-7 pm	14%	15%
7-8 pm	5%	10%
8-9 pm	8%	7%
9-10 pm	9%	7%
After 10 pm	9%	15%
	100%	100%

Funding Environment

Federal programs provided the majority of operating funds for nearly half of all respondent agencies (47%). Less often agencies relied on state funds (22%) and local funding (23%) for the majority of their operating fund. Few agencies depended primarily on county funding (4%), the nonprofit or private sector support (4%), or farebox (1%) for operations.

Much in the same way that New Jersey operators have had to cope with reduced casino revenue funds, paratransit operators have encountered declines in many of their funding sources and have sought new funding or cost savings to maintain operations. More than half pursued new funding in the past three years (57%). Of those agencies, 58% reported receiving new federal funds.

The three most frequently cited federal funding sources used by respondents were Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Section 5307 (rural program); FTA Section 5316 (Job Access Reverse Commute); and FTA Section 5317 (New Freedom). A significant challenge to pursuing federal funding is the need to match this support with local sourced funds. This is an especially difficult burden for paratransit providers as most FTA programs, including JARC and New Freedom initiatives, require a 50% local match. Nearly two-thirds of respondent agencies stated a lack of matching funds limited their ability to apply for grants at least some of the time. More than a third that reported difficulty seeking foundation support indicated match requirements was a source of that difficulty. Every New Jersey county paratransit provider reported that securing the local match required was a significant challenge.

Despite the challenges presented by federal funding, the usage of other sources for new funds pale in comparison. Only 16% of agencies reported receiving new funding from nonprofit foundations and only 14% reported new funding from state sources. While new funding has helped some agencies maintain or expand programs, 42% reported having to reduce or eliminate services due to funding constraints.

Coping Strategies

As most agencies face a sober financial situation, it is unsurprising that many have turned to conventional cost savings to maintain programs, see Table 12. A majority have reduced overtime (52%), while a third have reduced service hours (33%) and reduced staff (32%). Some agencies have sought to raise revenues through fare and donation policies – a third of all agencies surveyed increasing fares (34%). A small number of agencies (7%) increased the amount requested as donation.

Table 12 Conventional Cost Saving and Funding Used by Agencies

Conventional Strategies	Agencies Using This Strategy
Reduced overtime	52%
Increased fare	34%
Reduced service hours	33%
Reduced staff	32%
Reduced number of special trips	22%
Froze hiring	20%
Limited trips out of service area	17%
Limited number of trips per week	15%
Limited travel distance	14%
Established or revised eligibility guidelines	11%
Increased donation request	7%
Eliminated or changed route or service	6%
Reduced staff hours	2%
Froze wages	1%
Other	4%
N*	151

**Percentages do not add to 100% because of multiple responses by some respondents*

A major aim of the survey was to explore the innovative ways that agencies have used to raise funds, lower costs, and/or improve efficiencies but also where agencies focused on preserving services or not otherwise negatively impacting customers. This inquiry sought information on ten specific strategies as listed in Table 13 and was used to identify best practices discussed below. Respondents reported using several strategies to a high degree including coordination among agencies to share services and/or vehicles (58%), sale of advertising space (47%), and pursuit of foundation or charitable support (37%). In contrast, respondents were least likely to offer feeder service to traditional transit (21%), use volunteer drivers (20%), and purchase public/private carrier bus or rail tickets (12%).

Table 13 Alternative Coping Strategies Used by Agencies

Alternative Strategies	Agencies Using This Strategy	Agencies Encountering Difficulty Using This Strategy
Coordinated with other agencies to reduce costs (N=158)	58%	60%
Vehicle advertising (N=159)	47%	41%
Foundation or charitable support (N=158)	37%	65%
Implemented fixed or deviated fixed service (N=155)	32%	44%
Provided Medicaid contract services (N=148)	26%	55%
Transfers at central locations (N=155)	25%	37%
Developed fare or donation policy (N=156)	22%	38%
Offered feeder service to traditional transit (N=155)	21%	31%
Volunteer drivers (N=158)	20%	45%
Purchased public/private bus or rail tickets (N=159)	12%	5%

Respondents stated they used a few other innovative strategies or best practices in the previous three years including providing community outreach and education on the cost and value of their services and implementing new software and other technologies. As to the former approach, an informed public can serve as allies to providers when they seek to document, publicize, and determine strategies to overcome their financial struggles and to address needs. Technology, such as GPS and mobile data computers, can result in efficiency-related benefits which can support coordination efforts.

Most Commonly Used Innovative Strategies

Federal support of coordination through initiatives such as the United We Ride effort has likely contributed to agency adoption of this strategy. More than half of respondents named coordination activities among their efforts to reduce costs or improve efficiencies. Undertaking these activities is not without its challenges however. About 60% of respondents that coordinated in some manner reported experiencing difficulty. Those reporting difficulties with coordination stated that they encountered resistance by other agencies (51%); had difficulty in establishing a workable cost sharing agreement (43%); and lacked opportunities to share services or equipment (30%). One takeaway from the literature is that successful coordination and minimal resistance require that potential partners plan and pursue specific and tangible strategies. Early and regular communication must be maintained between partners. Depending on the coordination activity(s) attempted, service components of partnering entities must be discussed and understood. Designing a coordination effort as a pilot initiative may also reduce resistance. Additionally, state support for coordination can play a critical role in the outcome of such efforts (31).

Nearly half of all respondents sold vehicle advertising to supplement revenue, the second most popular alternative strategy. While many marketed bus wraps, some agencies had adopted other forms of advertising including video advertising onboard vehicles and ads on fare tickets. More than a third of agencies selling advertising reported they found it difficult to locate interested businesses (39%) and 29% reported a lack of resources such as time and/or expertise to pursue advertising opportunities. New Jersey's county providers have also tried to sell advertising and reported other challenges, namely market saturation in a given region and weaker demand in some rural areas. The

economic recession has intensified some of the reported difficulties. As conditions improve, agencies may have more success in securing advertisers.

More than a third (37%) of agencies sought support from foundations, the third most common alternative strategy. This strategy was deemed most problematic by agencies, with difficulties encountered by 65% of respondents. The challenges posed in pursuing foundation support included: inability to meet application criteria (49%); respondent assessment that the funding maximum was not worth the level of effort needed to complete the application (43%); and inability to meet match requirement (34%). Paratransit providers can adopt certain practices that may improve the likelihood of securing foundation support. To improve knowledge of appropriate opportunities, providers should consider strengthening their ties to community organizations and other stakeholders that are closely tied with foundations and that are knowledgeable of the funding these organizations provide. Several New Jersey providers stated that much of the grant information they were aware of was gathered by “word of mouth” among colleagues and other community stakeholders, including their local Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). New Jersey and its community transportation providers should consider following the example set by the Texas Department of Transportation, which is developing a resource guide to assist providers seeking foundation support. Such a guide would offer information on how to secure and document alternative matching fund options such as in-kind matches.

Least Commonly Used Innovative Strategies

Survey respondents indicated the lowest usage of three strategies: provision of feeder service to traditional transit (21%); use of volunteer drivers (20%); and purchase of public/private bus or rail tickets (12%). The high degree of response from agencies operating in part in rural areas (68%) may have reduced the attractiveness of feeder service or the purchase of bus/rail tickets to encourage transit use. Those that reported difficulty when implementing feeder service believed challenges arose from a lack of traditional transit serving desired destinations (67%); a lack of sheltered transfer areas (44%); and the costs due to the wait time needed to facilitate transfer movements (33%).

Only 20% of respondents reported using volunteer drivers to reduce costs or improve efficiencies, nearly half of which experienced difficulties in implementing this strategy. Respondents reported a lack of volunteer response (50%) and insurance issues (42%) as their top difficulties. Low usage of this strategy, together with the degree and nature of difficulty experienced, suggests that additional efforts need to be taken to address these underlying challenges, particularly issues related to insurance. Nationwide, organizations, such as Prairie Hills Transit in rural South Dakota and Maine’s York County Community Action Corporation, have successfully utilized volunteer drivers to lower costs and increase service, (29). A 2010 Beverly Foundation survey examining elder transport identified the use of volunteer staff and drivers as a top past, present, and anticipated future cost-cutting measures (32). New Jersey stakeholders also raised concern over volunteer driver insurance issues, which can limit the feasibility and attractiveness of such efforts among prospective volunteer drivers. To increase interest among potential volunteers and to make the use of volunteer drivers viable for county providers, efforts must be undertaken to address these issues. Stakeholders should seek ways to protect volunteer drivers under state volunteer immunity legislation and from vehicle insurance rate increase, denial, and/or dropping of insurance coverage solely due to their status as a volunteer driver. Many states have addressed these concerns to varying degrees, including Florida, Maine, California, and Michigan (33).

One-third or fewer respondents reported utilizing four other strategies: the development of fare or donation policies; implementing fixed or deviated fixed service; transfer at central locations; and provision of Medicaid contract service. As a large majority of agencies had fare policies in place, few reported developing such a policy in the previous three years. Agencies that used fixed or deviated fixed route services and transfers at central locations suggest why these strategies might be challenging to put into place. Respondents cited customer resistance to fixed route services and state regulatory requirements as impediments to implementation. Regarding the use of central transfer points, respondents cited difficulty establishing coordination with providers most often, as well as customer resistance to transferring and a lack of shelter at the desired transfer site(s).

Only about a quarter of respondents reported that they provided Medicaid contract services through the Medicaid broker or lead agency, more than half of which experienced difficulty in doing so. The overwhelming complaint (76%) was that the reimbursement rate was too low. The New Jersey providers interviewed cited the same concern. Despite the low rate of reimbursement, Medicaid contract services may present an opportunity to add Medicaid trips to existing vehicle runs, such as subscription trips. The addition of these trips to existing runs could result in increased service productivity per hour and may garner much needed revenue while incurring few additional costs (10).

Closing Suggestions

Respondents provided feedback through an open-ended concluding question on how their program and/or state could better meet the work related transportation needs of their residents with disabilities. Most comments focused on a need for increased funding. Others noted that new service routes should be created and/or existing routes expanded if employment transportation needs for this targeted population were to be better met. Some also acknowledged that coordination with other local providers, including social service agencies and municipalities, should be improved.

National Best Practices

One hundred eighty-six agencies provided either complete or substantially complete responses to the survey. To identify some specific best practice examples, a thorough review of the survey responses was undertaken with particular attention paid to the following four questions:

- In the past three years, have you pursued any new and innovative strategies to reduce costs, raise additional funds or improve efficiencies?
- Please briefly describe the strategies you have adopted
- Have you had difficulty in implementing any of these strategies?
- If you experienced any difficulties, what was the source of the difficulties?

From a total of fourteen innovative program candidates, five exemplary programs were selected that represented a cross-section of innovation in terms of funding, technology, and service design. Researchers sought more detailed information on each of these programs through e-mail exchange, phone interviews, and a review of agency documents; all of which was used to develop the profiles that follow.

**Adult Day Health Express
Pierce County Transit
Pierce County, Washington**

Pierce County Transit, serving an urban county with a population of 800,000, developed the Adult Day Health Express (ADHE) to replace adult day care services provided by Medicaid non-emergency advance reservation and ADA complementary paratransit services. In 2008, the Washington State Medicaid system discontinued the use of the Medicaid non-emergency advance reservation for the provision of adult day care transportation. As a result, adult day care transport was provided by the more expensive ADA complementary paratransit service (The Shuttle).

In 2010, Pierce County developed the ADHE as a public/private partner demonstration project to provide adult day care transportation using a less costly alternative to the ADA complementary paratransit service. This new group ride service was provided without a separate broker function. Specifically MultiCare Health System, the adult day program provider, arranged customer transportation directly with the ADHE provider, eliminating the costs associated with utilizing another party to broker or arrange the service. Funding for the ADHE program came from a variety of sources. The transportation provider augmented a \$15.00 per day transportation stipend provided by the state with demonstration funds from the Washington Department of Transportation; local funding from Pierce and Thurston Counties; and Pierce Transit, the ADA complementary paratransit (Shuttle) provider. The combined funding proved to be a cost efficient alternative to the Medicaid advance reservation and ADA transit services.

The ADHE program also implemented a cost-saving operational practice – grouping trips along certain routes, particularly those that cross county borders. Pierce Transit staff noted that grouping trips and funding for passengers originating in the more rural neighboring Thurston County with those in Pierce County has helped increase the productivity of service delivery for both counties.

Program Results

The ADHE program provided 58,000 passenger trips during its first 16 months of operation, effectively relieving the ADA system of providing this service. Table 14 compares the 2009 costs of providing service through the ADHE compared to that of Medicaid NEMT and Pierce Transit ADA services.

Table 14 Pierce County Adult Day Care Transportation Costs Compared to Medicaid NEMT and Pierce Transit ADA, 2009

Provider	Average Cost per Trip	Passengers per Revenue Hour
Medicaid NEMT	\$33.99	2.3
Pierce Transit ADA	\$38.70	2.2
Adult Day Health Express	\$29.90	3.71

The Pierce County staff are pleased with the results and believe the simple cost sharing model and customer reservation made directly through the Multi-Care Adult Day Care facility represents an ideal approach for creating a more efficient delivery of transportation than advance reservation NEMT or ADA service. Staff did not encounter any significant resistance by customers to the new service but did acknowledge delays associated with coordinating with Thurston County.

In the case of Pierce County, apparent adversity helped foster innovation. The discontinuation of Medicaid NEMT for adult day care transport and the higher costs associated with providing these services through ADA paratransit induced Pierce County to explore new ways to provide this much needed service. The imposition of this challenge effectively reduced institutional barriers to implementing this innovative service. The service continues today, with over 100,000 trips provided and has reduced demand for the more costly ADA paratransit service.

Future NJ Applications of this Best Practice

As a best practice example, ACHE demonstrates gains achieved by forming public/private partnerships and combining funding sources. Using existing vehicles to provide shared service between counties is an underutilized approach for county coordinated systems in New Jersey and can help to open up existing operations funding that can then be used to meet the growing demand for employment transportation, particularly for people with disabilities.

Flex-T Mobility Program Meadowlink EZ Ride Transportation Management Association Wood-Ridge, New Jersey

Meadowlink Transportation Management Association (TMA) has served counties in northern and central New Jersey for over 25 years, providing employer transportation services such as van pools, ride share matching, and shuttles linking transit stations and employment centers. Through its EZ Ride operations, Meadowlink has expanded this traditional outreach and has recently developed volunteer driver supported programs that focus on getting people with disabilities to employment opportunities.

In 2009 with funding support from the Kessler Foundation, Meadowlink initiated its Monmouth County Flex-T Mobility Program, a demonstration program aimed at meeting the needs of persons with disabilities seeking to access employment through an EZ Ride managed volunteer driver service. The Flex-T service operates as a curb-to-curb, shared ride model. The program currently operates fully in Monmouth County. Smaller pilot programs operate in Bergen, Essex, Hudson, Passaic, and Union counties. Areas covered are primarily urban and suburban. Interested customers must register for the program and set up a transportation account. Customers pay a \$15.00 annual membership fee and a pick up fee of \$2.50 plus mileage rate based on the federal Internal Revenue Service (IRS) annual rate, 55.5 cents per mile in 2012 for trips of less than 10 miles, and \$1.10 per mile for longer trips.

The program is open to anyone who has mobility needs, with a focus on people with disabilities. Individuals can register at the EZ Ride website and each of the four counties providing the Flex-T service has a Program Coordinator who assists customers in using the service. Information about the program is also provided by several community organizations that focus on the needs of people with disabilities seeking employment, including the Kessler Foundation and The Arc of Monmouth County.

EZ Ride develops a network of certified volunteer drivers who meet a series of standards related to driving experience, background checks, and a personal interview. Reliability and strong interpersonal skills are especially valued in their volunteer driver base.

Program Results

The Flex-T program is working to fill a void by meeting the growing demand for employment transportation for people with disabilities as well as an array of local trips for older persons and teenagers without access to an automobile. The program operates on a model that encompasses the provision of the vehicle (including GPS, mobile computers, and in-vehicle cameras), insurance, and customer service, as well as the volunteer driver force.

The initial program demonstration was funded through a Competitive Services grant from the nonprofit Kessler Foundation to promote mobility to employment for people with disabilities. One difficulty that needed to be overcome to make the program viable was to create an economy of scale so as to increase efficiency through shared rides. Marketing the program helped to increase the number of riders; this in turn allowed for an economy of scale through shared rides. The TMA adopted a strategy of collaborating closely with local community organizations/nonprofits working with the disability community so as to promote the service to both customers and volunteer drivers. The Flex-T fare has also been a barrier for some customers, as many are working entry level and/or part-time jobs and their income is relatively low. However, it was noted that the customers with disabilities traveling for employment are extremely motivated and committed to budgeting so they can meet their transportation costs.

As of 2012, the Monmouth County Flex-T program is providing approximately 750 passenger trips per month and is growing each month.

Future NJ Applications of this Best Practice

The Flex-T program could become an integrated part of New Jersey county coordinated systems. The county coordinated systems could contract for the service to complement their community transit programs, taking advantage of the lower costs resulting from the use of volunteer drivers to provide service in low density areas less well suited to the more expensive mini-bus advance reservation services currently operated by many county systems.

This best practice should also be considered for replication by the other seven New Jersey TMA organizations that could sponsor, if not directly provide, this program in their respective service areas within the State.

Longmont Call-N-Ride Pilot Program Special Transit Service (STS) Boulder, Colorado

The Longmont Coordination Technology Pilot Program is an FTA New Freedom funded program designed to coordinate the delivery of demand response services offered by the Boulder Special Transit Services (STS) program and the Denver Regional Transit District (RTD) program serving Longmont, Colorado. RTD is the public transportation service provider for the Denver Metro region and STS is a community transit provider that provides a range of transportation services including employment, recreational, and ADA complementary paratransit services that coordinate with the traditional transit services provided by the RTD. Longmont is a small city encompassing suburban and rural areas that receives services provided by the Denver RTD. The Longmont Coordination Technology Pilot Program focuses on meeting transportation needs of specialized populations including older persons, people with disabilities, and school trips currently served by the RTD program. The coordination program was initiated in September 2010.

The program uses Route Match routing and scheduling software to create an interface between the STS and RTD routing and scheduling systems, as well as expands the deployment of mobile data computers in the Longmont vehicles operated by STS. The objectives of the pilot was 1) to increase the number of passenger trips provided without increasing the number of vehicles needed or operating costs; 2) to reduce trip denials; and 3) to create a model for coordination between two transit agencies that resulted in increased efficiency. The Call-N-Ride service operates as a curb-to-curb service that is scheduled through an advance reservation process that maximizes shared riding among passengers traveling in the same approximate direction at the same approximate time. Passenger one-way fare is \$2.25, with a \$1.10 discounted fare available for persons with disabilities, the elderly, and select other customer populations.

The pilot relied on New Freedom funding for support—an initial \$206,000 grant for FY 2010/2011 and an additional \$193,000 in FY 2012/2013. Funding was used to hire a mobility coordinator; procure “Call and Ride” technology; and develop a tracking system for evaluating adherence to performance standards. The call and ride technology allows its users to maximize the efficiency of vehicle trips while meeting the geographic and time of travel needs of customers through a demand response service.

Program Results

The Longmont Call-N-Ride Pilot has been an unqualified success in improving utilization of the existing RTD and STS vehicles as shown in Table 15. The increase in overall passenger trips per hour from 2.7 to 3.6 trips per hour is a dramatic improvement in service productivity for demand response service. The Call-N-Ride program has resulted in a 45% increase in daily ridership in Longmont with only a 9% increase in total vehicle hours. The program has also enabled the RTD to eliminate three trips devoted to school bus students through the service integration.

**Table 15 Longmont Call-N-Ride Pilot Program
 Service Measures – Average per Day**

Service Measures	Average per Day		Percent Increase
	Jan 2010 - Aug 2010	Aug 2010 - Sept 2011	
RTD			
Passenger Trips	76	134	76%
Vehicle Hours	21.5	32	49%
Passenger Trips/Hour	3.5	4.2	20%
STS			
Passenger Trips	27	36	33%
Vehicle Hours	16	17.5	9%
Passenger Trips/Hour	1.6	2.0	25%
Total			
Passenger Trips	102	148	45%
Vehicle Hours	38	41.5	9%
Passenger Trips/Hour	2.7	3.6	33%

Among the barriers faced by STS and RTD were handling customer expectations related to being asked to use a different service, differences in fares, and the required use of car seats and seatbelts for RTD customers who were now using the STS vehicles that require these features. The success in

handling this transition was largely due to the support and understanding of the STS customer reservations staff who worked diligently to help RTD customers through this transition.

Future NJ Applications of this Best Practice

The Boulder STS and Denver RTD experience provides an excellent example of a practice that could be adopted by New Jersey operators. Opportunities exist for the New Jersey county coordinated systems and NJ TRANSIT to improve coordination where overlaps exist. Some work on coordination has already taken place including a pilot in service rationalization between the NJ TRANSIT 890 Easton-Phillipsburg bus route and the Warren County Shuttle, which operates in Phillipsburg, Pohatcong, and Greenwich townships in Warren County. While barriers, particularly those involving fare structures do exist, the elimination of service overlap may result in efficiencies, the savings from which may be redirected to meet emerging demands, including employment trips.

FlexService

Rhode Island Public Transit Authority (RIPTA)

Providence, Rhode Island

Since 2000 the Rhode Island Public Transit Authority has operated its curb-to-curb Flex Service to fulfill the unmet transportation needs of riders living in rural and suburban areas throughout Rhode Island that have little or no fixed route bus service. The service provides scheduled as well as reserved point deviation service with a 48-hour advance reservation within each of seven designated zones. With point deviation, the FlexService vehicle can leave its prescribed route to pick-up or drop-off passengers and then return to the defined route. In addition, FlexService allows boarding and alighting at key “FlexStops” within designated FlexZones without advance reservation, acting much like a fixed route bus operating in the low density areas. Customers have the option of calling to schedule a ride within the Flex Zone or boarding at a regularly scheduled FlexStop. One goal of the Flex Service is to connect passengers with traditional fixed route bus service for travel outside the zone. Riders making a FlexService reservation are encouraged to inform staff of the need to make a connection in order to facilitate their travel.

Unlike regular fixed route bus service, this accessible service uses 16 passenger vehicles with two wheelchair positions. These vehicles allow the RIPTA to provide an alternative to traditional fixed route bus service in areas where a large bus is not appropriate or able to operate due to roadway or demand constraints. Through its FlexService, the RIPTA has been able to increase its efficiency in serving persons eligible for ADA complementary paratransit service while also offering transportation services to traditional fixed route transit users in areas with little or no fixed route bus service.

Flex Service is open to the general public and provides scheduled pickups at key hospitals and other social service destinations attractive to ADA customers. The fare structure is the same for Flex as it is for RIPTA’s fixed route bus service.

Program Results

Since its introduction in August 2000, FlexService has enabled RIPTA to offer expanded transit service in low density suburban and rural areas of the state. The program now includes service in seven different zones in rural/suburban areas of the State. Funding for the service has come from several sources including JARC.

FlexService also provides a viable transportation option for ADA eligible customers through its accessible point deviation service. Through this service, RIPTA has been able to meet the employment transportation needs of people with disabilities who had relied primarily on costly taxi service and/or rides from friends and family before the implementation of the FlexService program. ADA eligible customers have expressed appreciation for the flexibility that the combined reservation and fixed route service provides.

Table 16 provides an overview of the route productivity for the seven zones served and the percentage of ADA trips made on each route during the first half of FY 2012. The RIPTA recognizes that the percentage of ADA eligible passengers using the FlexService has increased over the past ten years without a strong marketing effort to encourage this pattern. It should be noted that in the most urbanized zone – Woonsocket – most ADA complementary paratransit eligible customers reside within the ADA eligible zone so the use of FlexService within the Woonsocket zone is less than for the other more rural service areas. As would be expected, the majority of ADA eligible riders prefer using a curb-to-curb reservation service to get directly to their destinations rather than transferring to fixed route transit.

Table 16 FlexService, June 2011- December 2012

Zone	Ridership	Trips per hour	ADA Trips	% ADA Trips
Kingston	4791	2.3	467	10%
Narragansett	4010	2.3	488	12%
Pascoag	2585	2.1	919	36%
S. Aquidneck	4088	2.3	357	9%
W. Warwick	5432	3.2	1789	33%
Westerly	7696	2.6	536	7%
Woonsocket	16,947	5.0	1078	6%
TOTAL	45,549	3.1	5634	12%

Future NJ Applications of this Best Practice

While many New Jersey counties have employed the use of route deviation, the point deviation/reservation model is one that could enable county systems to provide a more efficient alternative to a more strictly advanced reservation curb-to-curb service. The use of FlexStop bus stops at key human service and medical destinations, as well as at major congregate residential locations, could provide a more efficient alternative to purely advance reservation services and may cost less than the more frequently used deviated fixed route services.

**Transit Operations Fee
 Corvallis Transit System (CTS)
 Corvallis, Oregon**

In February 2011 Corvallis, located in central western Oregon, implemented an innovative, dedicated source of revenue to support the city transit system, CTS. Specifically, the city council enacted three dedicated Sustainability Initiative Fees levied on residential, commercial, and industrial property owners to fund specific needs – transit operations, sidewalk maintenance, and city trees. Revenues raised by the fee replaced property tax funds that were used to support transit

operations. A divided city council approved the fees in October 2010. Additional fees supporting bicycling and other alternative transportation modes as well as energy use reduction and renewable energy education were rejected.

The transportation utility fee is based on a trip generation model developed by the Institute of Traffic Engineers (ITE) that represents the average cost of trips generated by households and businesses. In 2011 the monthly levy was \$2.75 per month for single family residences and \$1.90 for multi-family residences. Industrial and commercial customers are charged varying rates depending on business type and square footage. The fee is adjusted annually and is pegged to the average price of a gallon of gasoline. In 2012 the fee rose to \$3.73 for single family residences.

Approximately 54,000 persons reside in this thirteen square mile city. The CTS system operates twelve routes daily that cover the city, from 7:00am to 8:00pm. During the first year fee collection, revenues were projected to be \$850,000, sufficient to fund operations without transit fares. Prior to the implementation of the utility fee revenue, about \$400,000 in property taxes were used to support the CTS. In 2011 Corvallis raised \$880,000, exceeding expectations, allowing all CTS customers to ride for free.

Program Results

Having a dedicated and reliable revenue stream has allowed CTS to provide transportation services to more users and to expand its service area. The program has made strong efforts to market the benefits of free transit to residents. Ridership for FY11/12 exceeded 1.1 million rides, an increase of 247,000 or 28% over the previous fiscal year (34-36). In September 2012 CTS was able to implement the first of several planned service expansions. Through regional connections to other transit systems, riders can reach locations beyond Corvallis including Albany and other parts of Benton County. Dedicated funding, expanded service, and strong regional connections all provide benefit to persons with disabilities who can use the free transit service to access employment and other destinations.

Additionally, self-raised revenues, such as those obtained by fees, can be utilized as match for federal and other granting entities. As of FY11/12 the transit operations fee provided 31% of the agency's funds, while 40% of its operations is supported by federal and state grants. Consistent access to eligible match funds has allowed the agency to make good use of other funding sources as well.

Future NJ Applications of this Best Practice

While the county systems in New Jersey have not traditionally used a specific levy to support transit services, the potential for implementing a minimal levy that could be established through municipal or a county utility authority is worth exploring. Such action might be accomplished through a municipal or county referendum.

Conclusion

The five best practices detailed above provide a variety of alternative means to fund and more efficiently provide service. Coordination of service and vehicle use figure largely in Adult Day Health Express in Pierce County, Washington; Call-N-Ride Program in Boulder, Colorado; and FlexService in Rhode Island. Coordination of service between agencies, including public-private

partnership, was also the most frequently cited alternative strategy used among survey respondents, but it was one that posed considerable difficulty in implementation.

The Flex-T Program offered by Meadowlink EZ Ride TMA demonstrates the benefits that can be gained through the development and utilization of a volunteer driver base. Only 20% of survey respondent agencies have utilized volunteer drivers, with nearly half reporting difficulties in doing so. Meadowlink has been successful in this undertaking, in part, because they addressed the issue of insurance by covering their drivers.

Perhaps the most innovative best practice identified was that of Corvallis, Oregon, where they enacted a utility fee that funds all community transportation. Usage of such a fee provides a dedicated funding source that enables the agency to meet the demand for diverse trip purposes, including employment trips. Clearly the provision of community transportation was made a priority by community stakeholders and deemed a worthwhile undertaking that serves all.

These best practice agencies have shown that with dedication, effort, and persistence – including a willingness to explore new and sometimes unfamiliar ideas – they were able to provide better and more efficient transportation options for all of their clientele including people with disabilities seeking employment.

CHAPTER 6 CONSUMER FOCUS GROUP FINDINGS

Two consumer focus groups were convened for this study. These sessions were designed to elicit input on unmet employment-related transportation needs of persons with disability in New Jersey. In keeping with the core focus of the study, discussion at each focus group session centered on participant usage and experiences related to community (county) transportation.

Focus group participants were recruited using printed fliers distributed at each selected site and through research team contacts in the disability community. Participants were chosen based on their self-identification as a person with a disability currently employed or seeking employment. The first session was convened on 6/23/11 and was held at the Costello apartment complex, which is a 61-unit affordable rental development for special needs persons. A total of 12 individuals participated in this session. The second session was convened on 6/28/11 and was held at the Alliance for Disabled in Action, which is one of 12 independent living centers located in the state. A total of 11 persons participated in this second session. Both sessions were moderated by members of the research team using the same topic guide. Each session lasted approximately ninety minutes. This chapter presents highlights of the information gathered from the two focus groups organized by topic area.

Table 17 Focus group dates and locations

Date	Location	Number of participants
6/23/11	Costello Apartments Old Bridge, NJ	12
6/28/11	Alliance for Disabled in Action Edison, NJ	11

Participant Demographic Profile

Focus group participants completed a brief questionnaire prior to the onset of the moderated discussion. A variety of demographic data was collected as presented in Table 17. The overwhelming majority of participants reported they were Caucasian; single and never married; and had an annual household income of less than \$15,000. The majority (52%) were between the ages of 25 to 44 years old.

Over 90% reported no children reside in their household and 45 percent noted they live alone. The majority of participants resided in Middlesex County, New Jersey, with some living in Essex and Ocean County. Most reported residing in an apartment building (67%), with 29% living in a single family home. Lastly, 90% percent of participants reported their household had internet access.

Table 18 Focus Group Characteristics

Characteristics	Percent
Race	
White not Hispanic	77%
Black not Hispanic	9%
White Hispanic	9%
Native American	5%
Black Hispanic	0%
Asian	0%
<i>N</i>	22
Gender	
Female	52%
Male	48%
<i>N</i>	23
Marital Status	
Single – never married	83%
Married/civil union	13%
Separated or divorced	4%
Widowed	0%
Living with partner	0%
<i>N</i>	23
Age	
18-24	17%
25-34	26%
35-44	26%
45-54	22%
55-64	9%
65+	0%
<i>N</i>	23
Household Income	
Under \$15,000	67%
\$15,000-\$24,999	6%
\$25,000-\$34,999	11%
\$35,000-\$49,999	6%
\$50,000-\$74,999	6%
\$75,000-\$99,999	6%
\$100,000-\$149,999	0%
\$150,000 or more	0%
<i>N</i>	18
Residence	
Single family home	29%
Apartment building	67%
Condominium	5%
Multi-family home	0%
Townhouse	0%
<i>N</i>	21

General Travel Experiences and Expectations

Overall, participants reported traveling during a typical week for a variety of trips related to employment, education, shopping/errands, and/or medical. In terms of travel mode, no participants in the first session reported being able to drive an automobile and very few in the second session reported driving. In fact, many noted their travel options are limited because they cannot drive an automobile. Travel modes used by participants included: county shuttles and/or county advanced reservation paratransit; taxis; NJ TRANSIT Access Link service; Medicaid taxi (*for medical trips only*); light rail; walking; bicycling; and being a passenger in the car of a family member and/or friend. Several noted paying their family member and/or friend for providing transportation.

Participants were asked how they determined the transportation options available to them in their area. Common responses were word of mouth; calling the county office on disability, calling the New Jersey Division of Disability Services and referring to their annual Resource Guide; and by attending various community outreach events/meetings. Some noted their job coaches helped them determine feasible transportation options.

When asked what they liked most about the transportation options used, responses varied based on the transportation modes utilized. For example, those using any form of public transit, including county paratransit, cited reasonable costs and the independence the mode permits as benefits. Those using NJ TRANSIT Access Link and/or county demand response service mentioned that the curb-to-curb service these modes provide alleviated many safety fears/concerns about waiting at unfamiliar transit stops.

In terms of what participants liked least, those using county paratransit cited lack of timeliness and limited service hours. Several participants using county services and/or Access Link complained about negative experiences related to sharing rides, but generally acknowledged an understanding that shared rides facilitate cost containment. Those relying on taxis cited cost concerns as a negative and those receiving rides from friends/family mentioned lack of independence as a negative.

In total, regardless of travel mode(s) used, most participants explained they miss opportunities on a regular basis to make trips for social purposes, which contributes to isolation and negatively impacts quality of life. One person explained that she has no ability to make “spontaneous” plans because of the limited travel modes available to her. Many voiced support for this assessment. Most employed participants also noted that they have limited to no ability to combine their work trips with other travel purposes, such as shopping or medical appointments. The few that reported grouping trips on occasion emphasized they must be prepared to wait for long periods of time in between their desired destinations. Despite these various obstacles, participants in each group expressed overall gratitude for their existing travel options that meet at least some of their trip needs and indicated a commitment to searching for other feasible travel options to address their unmet transportation needs. As one participant remarked, “Nothing in the world is going to stop me from going where I need to go.” She added that while the travel modes she uses, including Access Link, may not always be ideal, they usually permit her to get from “point A to point B”, reducing the frequency of being “trapped in my house like house arrest.”

Discussion was generated on the related topic of what participants want most from transportation and the features they consider most important. Reasonable cost was mentioned, as was need for

service frequency and extended evening and morning hours. The importance of these particular features in facilitating employment trips was emphasized in both focus group sessions.

Employment Travel

Almost all participants in the first session reported being employed (9 part-time; 2 full time) and one participant was actively searching for employment. Six persons in the second session reported working part-time, with none working full time. The remaining participants in the second session reported they were actively seeking employment.

While some employed participants reported using the same travel mode to/from work, many others reported using a variety of travel modes in order to successfully reach their employment and other desired destinations. Limited service hours were cited as the main reason for using multiple travel modes. For example, one person reported using a taxi to reach work in the morning and the county shuttle service for his return trip. He would prefer to use the county shuttle for both segments of his work trip but cannot do so because the county shuttle does not begin operations early enough in the morning to meet his trip need. Another reported taking a ride from a friend to work and then using a county shuttle or taxi cab for his return trip. Many participants emphasized needing to rely on family and friends to meet their transportation needs that are not currently met by any community transit service.

Those using taxis to and/or from work also remarked that due to the typically exorbitant cost associated with taxi service, they use taxis reluctantly and when no other options are feasible. However, it was acknowledged by many that taxi service is often the only option for evening trips or when travel is desired during other off-peak periods. Overall, participants acknowledged they are using the most feasible travel options available to reach their employment destinations. However, those options are rarely ideal, especially because of factors such as limited service hours for county services and the cost of taxis, the latter of which is used when transportation is needed to/from work during off-peak periods.

Those seeking employment discussed how transportation issues have posed barriers in their job search. Limited service hours were cited, as was difficulty in determining feasible travel options, especially related to using public transit. One participant seeking employment explained that lack of transportation options has posed a problem in her job search process and she emphasized willingness to travel up to one hour for employment. Many others expressed a similar willingness to travel one hour or more for work opportunities, while some indicated they were not pursuing work beyond a thirty minute commute. Another participant mentioned he was seeking new employment but only at job sites located along the bus route near his home.

Interestingly, many working participants reported experiencing extremely long commute times for at least one leg of their work journey, including several traveling up to two hours one way. One participant explained that while his morning commute time as a passenger in a friend's car is about 30 minutes, his afternoon commute requires two hours, as he takes public transportation in the afternoon that requires a transfer trip.

Most participants indicated they did not have an established back-up option to reach work or home if for some reason their typical transportation option was not feasible on a given day. They reported they would most likely contact a family member/friend to request a ride or use a taxi service. No

participants were aware that certain Transportation Management Associations operating in the state – such as Keep Middlesex Moving serving Middlesex County – offer an emergency ride home to commuters who use carpool, vanpool, or mass transit at least once a week.

County Transportation

As the focus of this study is on county transportation, the session moderators sought information on how these services are specifically meeting the employment-related travel needs of participants. As noted previously, the majority of the focus group participants from both sessions reside in Middlesex County, where two main county transportation services are available. One is curb-to-curb advanced reservation service and the other option is a robust, deviated fixed route shuttle service that operates on seven routes. The majority of participants in both sessions reported using county paratransit for at least one segment of their work and/or other trips.

Participants not using any county transportation services reported limited service hours (service not available early enough in the morning or late enough in the evening) were the main reason for their decision not to use such service and a few complained about service reliability. In the first session, five participants noted they used the advanced reservation county service to travel to/from work and three reported using the county shuttle systems. Most of these participants acknowledged that the service hours were limited in terms of meeting their employment travel needs, especially with regard to morning, evening, and Saturday service. In terms of cost, those using the county shuttle service reported the 50-cent one way fare was reasonable and added that they are willing to pay the fare as they know other options would be more costly. In contrast, several participants using county advanced reservation services complained the cost was too high (\$2.00 one way trip).

Interestingly, several participants in each session reported using county transportation services as a feeder to reach public transit, which was noted as a helpful strategy to reach employment opportunities located in counties beyond their residence. When probed for detail on this topic, participants explained their county (Middlesex) is extremely supportive of feeder service and proactively explores this option with interested customers.

Other Public Transportation

Participants also shared feedback on public transit options other than county transportation. Those not using public transit available near their home reported a variety of reasons for their decision not to use these services including, difficulty understanding how to plan trips, concerns about environmental conditions along the route to a given stop/station, and cost. Several also explained that public transit service was not available near their home.

The few persons using public transit modes (*other than county transit*) reported mostly positive feedback, explaining that public transit generally offers faster travel times than paratransit options. One person explained her preference for public transit over paratransit was because she does not have to worry about public transit “no shows”, as she does sometimes with paratransit. It was remarked that “no shows” pose particular difficulty for employment-related travel. Another participant remarked that using public transit in a post-ADA world gives her equal access to services experienced by persons without disability, allowing closer parity among all populations.

Several participants from the first session residing in the Costello apartments reported taking NJ TRANSIT's ADA complementary service, Access Link, for work and other trips. These participants explained they access this service by walking to the nearby medical center that is within the three-quarter mile Access Link boundary. They reported that while the walk to the medical center in the evening was difficult due to poor lighting conditions, waiting at the center was ideal, as restroom facilities are available. Seating is also available both inside the center and outdoors near the entrance. They added that when the weather is inclement, they often wait inside the center for the Access Link vehicle to arrive. This finding provides evidence of the importance of addressing customer needs at transit waiting areas/sites.

With regard to feedback on Access Link service, most shared positive commentary, citing the benefits of the service include reasonable cost and timely and reliable service. Some mentioned the Access Link automated trip reminder feature as a positive feature as well. Those citing negative feedback on Access Link service mentioned stringent eligibility criteria and limited geographic coverage. Others mentioned the service window (scheduled pick-up time plus or minus 20 minutes) as a particular concern for employment travel.

Most participants, including those with experience using public transit, reported they would be interested in taking a travel training class if it was made available. Numerous participants explained they have had difficulties in planning public transit trips due to confusion regarding understanding schedules/maps and determining the best ways to navigate a given transit station.

Conclusion

Observations from the focus groups provided insights into how persons with disability in New Jersey who are employed and/or actively seeking work meet their transportation needs and the obstacles encountered in doing so. Interestingly, most participants use a variety of transportation modes to meet their diverse travel needs and most of those identifying themselves as employed reported using different modes to and from work. Factors including limited service hours/days and frequency were the most commonly cited reasons for this reliance on multiple transit modes, limited ability to combine work trips with other travel purposes, and overall difficulty in meeting transportation needs. This finding suggests it would be beneficial for community transportation providers to collaborate with their respective customer base to explore options for altering service hours/days when feasible.

Participants in both sessions discussed how county transportation could better serve their employment travel needs and relayed what they considered the most important transportation-related issues facing persons with disabilities in the state with regard to securing and maintaining employment. While cost was a concern for participants, most expressed willingness to pay a reasonable fare, especially for employment trips.

Suggestions for needed improvements to facilitate employment trips using county transportation focused primarily on the following:

- Begin morning service hours earlier;
- Extend evening service hours;
- Increase overall service frequency;
- Increase geographic coverage;

- Strive to deliver service on time; and
- Increase funding available to counties for vehicle purchase so the above cited needs can be more readily achieved.

The group in one session collectively brainstormed potential new transportation options to reach employment destinations and carpooling was suggested by several participants. The focus group moderators suggested reaching out to the local Transportation Management Association as a resource for information and guidance on best practices for implementing a carpool and for assistance in potentially creating a carpool to targeted employment site (s).

Finally, the focus groups also shed light on opinions related to if and how transportation issues are considered by participants in their housing and employment decisions. As one participant explained, she has learned that transportation issues can eliminate what are otherwise feasible employment options so she has made the decision to reside near public transit. Discussion on this topic suggests however that although most participants noted transportation was a significant concern and many had experienced social isolation and other quality of life issues due to transportation related factors, only a minority considered transportation when determining their housing, employment, and other lifestyle decisions.

CHAPTER 7 RECOMMENDATIONS

Background

In 2011, the then-director of NJ TRANSIT Office of Community Mobility, Robert Koska, gave a presentation to his peers in New Jersey's county paratransit community. He explained that in struggling to cope with the economic crisis, county providers must ask themselves the larger question of "what is the role of community transportation?"

He opined that the role is two-fold:

- It involves working to create a feeder system to other local, regional, and/or cross jurisdictional transit services in order to improve access and mobility and to increase the reach of traditional transit into areas that cannot usually support such services.
- Second, and perhaps most critical, the role involves providing life enhancing, and in many cases life sustaining service, to persons who cannot access other means of transportation.

The research team considered this dual role of county transportation providers in determining the recommendations presented in this chapter, with each recommendation category designed to aid county providers in achieving that dual role. Recommendations were determined using the information gathered from the various tasks conducted for this study, including the consumer focus groups, key stakeholder informant interviews, nationwide community paratransit provider survey, and from the other best practice research undertaken.

It must be reiterated that no single solution can be expected to alleviate the current financial crisis affecting New Jersey's county transportation provider community nor will every recommendation presented in this chapter necessarily benefit each county provider, as factors such as regional/local issues will impact viability of any particular recommendation. For example, purchasing rail/bus tickets will not likely yield significant success in a rural environment with limited to no public transit. Thus, a multitude of strategies must be considered and attempted by providers if any lasting financial respite is to be had. Through this research endeavor it was confirmed that New Jersey's county providers are indeed working to identify and pursue additional funding opportunities. For example, several providers are experiencing progress in developing mandatory fare systems, generating advertising revenue, and pursuing Title XIX Medicaid contracting under the Statewide Medicaid Transportation broker.

It must also be emphasized that in working to maintain their services in this difficult funding environment, county community transportation providers are in need of support from the larger public and private sector, including the state, other government agencies (including their respective county government), nonprofit partners, private industry, and the general public – all of whom have a vested interest, either direct or indirect, in the ability of county transportation providers to continue meeting the increasing demand for services among the transportation disadvantaged community. This need for service is only expected to increase, due to factors including the aging of the baby boomer population. In fact, the over 65 age group is expected to grow at a rate about four times faster than the population as a whole between 2010 and 2030 (37). The resultant community transportation demand expected will be daunting. Thus, the recommendations presented in this

chapter are not only directed to county transportation providers, but to the larger stakeholder community as well.

Who will rise to meet this anticipated service demand if county community transportation entities continue to experience economic hardships without relief and can no longer provide transportation to those most in need? Who will suffer under such circumstances? Clearly the most immediate suffering would be experienced by the transportation disadvantaged, but the costs would ultimately be borne by all.

Recommendation Strategies

Recommendation strategies are presented below in six distinct categories. The ultimate aim of the recommendations is to offer some feasible strategies county community transportation providers and other stakeholders can pursue so that persons with disability seeking employment transportation and other transportation disadvantaged populations can enjoy expanded mobility with both new services and improved existing services.

Program Evaluation

Each of New Jersey's 21 county transportation providers should undertake an effort to initiate and/or strengthen their program evaluation efforts in order to determine the economic costs, benefits, and social impacts of the services they provide. This recommendation was shared by some of the stakeholders interviewed for this study and the research team agrees the results of pursuing such action will be positive for the state's county community transit provider community and the customers they serve.

Why Evaluate Programs?

For one, determining the economic costs, benefits, and social impacts of county community transportation services and sharing those findings through an educational outreach effort will serve to better inform stakeholders at both the grassroots and political levels of the critical role county paratransit services provide in the state. An informed public and political network can serve as invaluable allies to county providers as they seek to document, publicize, and determine strategies to combat their financial plight. Several VTC survey respondents reported that educating their customers on the costs of the community transportation services they provide has been a useful strategy in gaining public understanding and support for the providers' quest for additional funds.

Documentation of the benefits derived from their services will also aid any and all efforts to pursue policies and legislation supportive of county transportation services. Further, being able to quantify the costs, social impacts, and other benefits of county transportation programs can be an important factor in the success of a county provider in their quest to secure matching funds for a given grant opportunity and may even play a role in the award of a particular grant. Finally, documenting the costs and benefits of the services provided will aid county providers in evaluating program components, creating efficiencies, and improving overall system management.

How to Document Costs, Benefits, and Social Impacts

Strategies and a toolkit for how to document costs are provided in the TCRP report entitled *Sharing the Costs of Human Services Transportation*. Researcher Jon Burkhardt and his study co-authors present

a framework for documenting and reporting transportation costs and services, which they explain can serve to improve program management, the determination of program outcomes and effects, and enhance the success of coordination efforts including the allocation of appropriate costs (38). The data required to follow their framework is data New Jersey county providers already maintain/collect for the various federal programs upon which they rely for program support. Examples include total dollar costs, total vehicle miles, total vehicle hours, total unlinked passenger trips, and total unduplicated persons served. If county providers could agree to use this model cost framework, they would be advancing the goal of documenting their costs in a uniform manner, as well as laying the groundwork for improved service coordination among agencies.

Strategies for documenting benefits are not as widely discussed as cost documentation and concern is sometimes expressed regarding how to document intangible benefits. However, county paratransit providers can look to existing efforts when seeking to document their respective program benefits. For example, Meadowlink TMA in New Jersey has been developing a strategy for measuring the impacts of their diverse transportation programs targeted to the transportation disadvantaged community. To achieve that task they follow a five step approach that includes: determining the efforts applied (inputs); identifying results (outputs); developing key ratios; assessing client and societal impacts of the service; and calculating the financial and non-financial benefits (39). Inputs encompass factors such as costs associated with staff and the actual transportation service. Outputs focus on factors such as total rides provided, vehicles managed, etc. Impacts can include access to employment opportunities, access to affordable transportation, reduction in Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT), etc. Meadowlink acknowledges their approach is not an exact science and the assumptions used need to be validated but overall, their approach offers an example of how to begin exploring costs/benefits of transportation programs targeted to the transportation disadvantaged community and is a tool for measuring both program successes and failures. As one interviewee for this study remarked, “you can’t manage what you don’t measure.”

Grant Funding Opportunities

In this climate of fiscal restraint, the ability to find expanded funding to subsidize transportation will be challenging. However, there are always new opportunities that can be considered for possible grant funding support, some of which result from truly new funding initiatives, while others could be the result of a given funding program’s reorganization. For example, on July 6, 2012 President Obama signed the surface transportation reauthorization bill into law that replaces SAFETEA-LU, called Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21) (40). While details of the law were under examination at the time of this report’s finalization, it is known that MAP-21 consolidates the FTA Sec. 5317 (New Freedom) program into FTA Section 5310, an action which will now make operating funds available to programs focused on the needs of both older persons and people with disabilities. In addition, the JARC program (formerly Sec. 5316) has been combined into the Sec. 5307 and 5311 funding programs and thus JARC efforts can be funded through either of these two formula funds going forward.

In addition to new funding sources, potential existing sources not often pursued by New Jersey county providers that have been successfully pursued by others in the nation to support paratransit services should also be considered. In total, New Jersey’s county community transportation providers need to commit to actively pursuing both new and underutilized grant opportunities and

must continue to envision this component of their work as vital to supporting the family of services they offer the transportation disadvantaged community.

Federal Funding

Several examples of new and/or not typically pursued federal funding opportunities county providers should consider monitoring and pursuing in the future include the following:

- In February 2012, FTA announced a solicitation of project proposals through their Bus and Bus Facilities Livability initiative indicating \$125 million in funding would be made available for capital projects focused on replacing, rehabilitating, and purchasing buses and related equipment (41). Public agencies, private entities providing public transportation, and nonprofits are eligible for this funding.
- In 2011, FTA announced a notice of funding availability for a new initiative called the Veterans Transportation and Community Living Initiative (VTCLI), which is focused on providing funds to suburban, rural, and urban areas throughout the country to promote one-call transportation centers so that veterans can easily access needed transportation opportunities (42). This funding is supported through the Bus and Bus Facilities Livability Initiative. The first round of funding in FY 2011 gave \$34.6 million for 55 projects in 32 states and for FY 2012, a total of \$29 million was awarded for 64 projects in 33 states (43). It should be noted that while VTCLI funding activities must be focused on supporting American veterans, other transportation disadvantaged populations without veteran status can benefit as well from a VTCLI grant.

NJ TRANSIT received a 2011 VTCLI award on behalf of the Camden County One Call, One Click Center, one of the three original USDOT Mobility Services for All Americans (MSAA) awardees. Morris County, New Jersey received a 2012 VTCLI award to develop a “one-click, one call” transportation resource center that will be designed to coordinate local transportation services, including the county paratransit services, and improve access to several area Veterans Administration Healthcare centers. Several other New Jersey county stakeholders interviewed for this study indicated they saw the need for and potential value of counties partnering together to create a one-stop transportation information and/or scheduling center. Pursing a VTCLI grant could be one means to achieving that goal.

- In April 2011, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) announced the availability of over \$100 million through three Self-Sufficiency grant programs to help connect persons to jobs, education, and supportive services (44). Funding for mobility managers and possibly transportation services for residents of HUD- related housing may be deemed eligible through this initiative, as they contribute to the goal of increasing access to employment. County transportation providers should reach out to New Jersey’s local public housing authorities to discuss grant partnering opportunities.
- In April 2009, President Obama signed into law the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act, which focuses on supporting volunteerism nationwide. The Act also created a Social Innovation Fund focused on improving the lives of low-income community residents in three priority areas: economic opportunity, healthy futures, and youth development (45). Access to transportation is a component of all three priority areas. A variety of entities are eligible for the Social Innovation Fund program, including public agencies and nonprofits.

The third annual grant review was conducted in spring 2012 with total awards issued expected to be \$10-15 million (45).

Nonprofit Funding

In their quest for grant funding opportunities, county transportation providers should also confer with nonprofit entities in their region to explore the possibility of partnering with one another to seek grant funding. In addition, county providers should seek funding opportunities from the nonprofit sector. Many nonprofit organizations that support persons with disabilities, the elderly, and other transportation disadvantaged populations recognize the vital role transportation has in the lives of their clients and offer funding support for transportation. In New Jersey for example, the Henry H. Kessler Foundation – which is a private, nonprofit organization focused on improving the lives of persons with disabilities – provides funding opportunities for transportation initiatives. Meadowlink TMA has successfully used funding from a Kessler Foundation grant to develop their Flex-T program for persons with disabilities seeking employment transportation and in 2011, Middlesex County received a \$48,048 Kessler grant being used to fund operation of an accessible feeder to transit service for people with disabilities traveling to competitive employment. The 2011 Middlesex County paratransit application for a Kessler Foundation Signature grant is included in this report appendix as a model resource for county transportation providers.

Connecting to Funding Opportunities

To effectively consider and pursue the funding opportunities described above, as well as any other potential new funding source, optimum connectivity needs to be established between those knowledgeable about funding opportunities and the county transportation provider community. Simply, county providers need to be aware of new opportunities on the federal, state, local, and private fronts. Some county providers interviewed indicated they were not as “in the loop” regarding funding opportunities as some of their peers. Some also indicated they have difficulty with the grant writing process itself, as potential funders often require a diverse array of information and detail depending on the grant in question. Grant writing can also be very time consuming. To address these issues, several strategies should be followed:

- First, county providers need to maintain frequent contact with knowledgeable resources that include NJ COST, their designated MPO, NJ TRANSIT’s Office of Community Mobility, their local TMA, and with other departments, such as the planning unit, within their own county. Many stakeholders interviewed for this study emphasized much of the grant information they were aware of was garnered from “word of mouth” among colleagues within the county provider community, as well as from those entities listed above. All of these entities are a valuable source of information not only on new grant opportunities, but also on related topics including how to secure match funds and innovative match strategies. County government should encourage and support county transportation providers in pursuing grant opportunities by offering professional staff support when possible. Counties should also reach out to their MPO when seeking guidance in the grant writing process. MPOs may be able to offer examples of previously submitted grant proposals that can help guide a given county in their grant writing endeavors.
- Secondly, NJ TRANSIT’s Office of Community Mobility should reach out to CTAA’s Institute for Transportation Coordination to request a working meeting led by the latter,

which would focus on informing the 21 county transportation providers of the latest funding opportunities. The research team discussed this possibility in 2011 with CTAA's Joblinks director and this strategy should be pursued.

- Third, NJ TRANSIT should suggest the National Transit Institute (NTI) at Rutgers University develop a course targeted to community transportation providers on the topic of grant seeking and grant writing. Information and training on these two topics could benefit New Jersey's county community transportation providers, as well as other community providers in the nation immensely. A recent survey effort by the Texas Department of Transportation – Public Transportation Division targeted to community transportation providers nationwide found that the number one type of assistance respondents reported their organization needed in terms of grant development was help with seeking out potential grant opportunities.
- Fourth, NJ TRANSIT's Office of Community Mobility should work with a partner entity, such as NJ COST, to create a resource guide that includes vital information needed to pursue new or alternative revenue options. The Texas Department of Transportation is working on a document that is to include information such as new funding sources to consider, and details on match funding related to eligibility, in-kind matches, and documentation.

Funding Match Support

Finally, a much discussed topic during the interview sessions conducted for this study involved the difficulties county community transportation providers have experienced in securing the match funds required by various grant programs, especially the 50% match required for operation costs under most FTA programs used by county providers. New Jersey providers are not alone in having difficulties securing match funds. In a recent NCHRP study that included internet and phone surveys of state departments of transportation, researchers found securing local match support for FTA 5310, 5316 and 5317 programs was a problem consistently cited by interviewees, as was a desire to remove these local match requirements (46). The VTC survey demonstrated that nearly two-thirds of respondent agencies reported a lack of matching funds limited their ability to apply for grants at least some of the time. In addition, more than one-third who specifically reported difficulty in securing foundation support noted inability to meet a match requirement was a source of that difficulty.

County community transportation providers seeking match funds for their FTA Sec. 5316 JARC program, Sec. 5317 New Freedom program, and/or Sec. 5310 Transportation for Elderly Persons and Persons with Disabilities program should be aware that federal funds from other programs such as HUD's Community Development Block Grants, the U.S. Department of Health and Senior Services Community Services Block Grants, and funding from Area Agencies on Aging and the Older Americans Act may be eligible as match sources (6). Exploring these other potentially useful public sources of match funds is especially timely and critical in New Jersey, since the state's decision was made to eliminate the usage of Post-TANF funds as a match source beginning in Fiscal Year 2010 (2).

Depending on the particular objective of a given transportation service, county transportation providers may be able to secure match funds from entities such as the state Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services, local school districts involved with transitioning youth to employment, and the private sector, which encompasses area employers.

Pursuing in-kind matches is another avenue New Jersey county community transportation providers should explore as a means to meet federal and other grant match requirements. In-kind matches are typically non-cash contributions provided by non-federal parties. A variety of U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB) circulars provide guidance on in-kind matches including OMB Circulars A-87, A-102 and A-133 (7). Through the best practice scan, it was determined that other states report regularly using in-kind matches to help meet federal match requirements. Determining the value of the contribution and documenting said contribution are critical elements of using in-kind match support. Many providers using in-kind matches pursue creative approaches in securing this type of support. For example, one provider noted using community service support as a match and another uses excise tax savings as in-kind support from selling his used vehicle tires. A template form is included in the report appendix that is used by Texas community providers to help document their in-kind matches in terms of important elements such as description of the in-kind item/service, donor, value, and value determination.

Another area of potential regarding match support lies in Transportation Development Credits or Toll Credits (TCs). TCs are permitted by federal law and allow states to use toll credits earned from qualifying toll facility expenditures to serve as a non-federal match for capital transit projects (8,9). Toll credits earned by states are based on the total cost of specific improvement activities deemed eligible to highways, bridges, and tunnels. Use of TCs became more attractive to states following SAFETEA-LU amendments to the statute, which allowed a given state's toll credit calculation to include facilities that were built, improved or maintained with federal funds (8,9). Many states including Texas, Florida, Pennsylvania, Ohio, and New Jersey use TCs. NJ TRANSIT uses TCs as a match for some capital funding requirements. New Jersey is in a prime position to explore expanded usage of TCs as a source of match support for federal grants due its numerous toll-roads miles. As such, NJ TRANSIT and the county provider contingent should discuss if and how TCs could benefit the latter in their quest to secure required match support. Reaching out to the New Jersey Division of the Federal Highway Administration would be the most appropriate first step in this regard.

More detail on the topic of match funds is discussed under the Legislative and Regulatory Opportunities recommendation category presented later in this chapter.

Non-Grant Funding Opportunities

Pursuing non-grant funding is as important as seeking grant funding opportunities. There are numerous non-grant funding strategies community transportation providers in New Jersey and throughout the country are pursuing, as demonstrated through this study's stakeholder interview findings and national survey results. New Jersey's 21 county community transportation providers should be pursuing all of the strategies highlighted below to the extent possible, as each offers its own unique advantages.

Bus Advertising

Although successfully securing bus advertising will not be achieved by all, it is a worthwhile strategy for providers to investigate as a means to supplement existing revenue. Currently four New Jersey county providers have advertising broker contracts; in 2006 none had such contracts. While the annual revenue generated from these contracts is typically small (less than \$100,000 dollars

annually for all NJ systems), there are other benefits associated with advertising arrangements, including that on-vehicle advertising revenue is an eligible source of matching funds for FTA grants.

As previously reported, almost half of the VTC national survey respondents reported pursuing the sale of bus advertising rights and several New Jersey county providers have done so as well, with Middlesex County reporting success. Ride Connection of Portland, Oregon reported their bus advertising arrangements have yielded revenue for their system and they have also benefitted from the development of a bus advertising policy guidance document that serves their agency in determining the most appropriate advertising partners (47). Two novel advertising pursuits mentioned by survey respondents included the sale of advertising space on bus tickets and using video advertising onboard buses. Despite these successes, it must be acknowledged that selling bus advertising may not be a feasible strategy for all county community transportation providers due to issues including market saturation in a given region/locale, decreased overall business interest in advertising due to the poor economy, and less demand among advertising buyers in some rural areas.

Donations and Fare Programs

To better cope with the existing economic environment, a uniform mandatory fare program should be considered for implementation by New Jersey's county community transportation providers. Currently, two county providers have neither a donation nor a fare policy, eight report having a donation policy only, one has a fare policy only, and ten report having both a donation and fare policy in place. Prior to 2009, only one county (Monmouth) had a mandatory fare on the majority of their transportation services. Since 2009, Ocean, Middlesex, and Union counties now also charge fares on the majority of their services. The combined revenue of these three counties from fares now accounts for over 25% of the total annual fare and donation revenue for all 21 counties.

As determined by the VTC national survey, New Jersey's county providers are not utilizing fare programs as prolifically as their peer organizations in other states. Specifically, almost 80% of VTC survey respondents reported charging a fare compared to only 20% reporting a customer donation policy. In addition, 42% of survey respondents reported increasing their fare in the last three years as a means to supplement funds. This farebox revenue represents a critical component of their respective program budgets; 100 respondents report that on average 13% of their budget is currently supported by farebox.

When interviewed, many county providers and other stakeholders explained that the politics surrounding the issue of donations and fare policies often impact the ability of the providers to implement such programs. They explained that elected county government officials are reluctant to permit fares due to concerns that such action will anger residents who utilize the service. However, many acknowledged that county residents appreciate and value the service and are often willing to pay. NJ COST recommends in their *Stranded in New Jersey* report that a mandatory customer payment be imposed by the state and/or localities (2). Three counties who have instituted fare policies since 2009 explained that this action has helped them maintain service levels despite reductions in SCDRTAP funds.

The research team agrees that pursuing a uniform mandatory fare program across all counties will diminish local political concerns associated with instituting a fare. For this recommendation to succeed, it may need to be pursued by the state legislature. To alleviate equity concerns associated

with a mandatory fare, a reduced fare could be offered to customers with disability and the elderly. VTC survey findings found that a reduced fare is offered to persons with disability by 60% of survey respondents who charge a fare, with 68% offering a reduced fare to elderly customers. Again, if a reduced fare component of a mandatory fare program is pursued, the reduced fare should be uniform across counties.

Volunteer Drivers

Volunteers in the United States are a valuable commodity. The nonprofit organization Independent Sector determined the 2010 dollar value of a volunteer hour in New Jersey is \$25.64 (48). Nationwide a variety of transportation programs that focus on meeting the needs of the transportation disadvantaged are developing volunteer driver programs as a cost saving strategy. New Jersey's county community transportation providers should be encouraged to pursue this strategy.

In New Jersey, Hunterdon County has an active volunteer driver program that provides medical trips in county vehicles. Meadowlink TMA also reported using volunteer drivers to support several of their programs, including the Flex-T employment program for persons with disability and the Community Cars program for the elderly. Meadowlink explained that use of volunteer drivers helps to keep the fares low for customers. Other TMAs in the state are also using volunteer driver support. Beyond New Jersey, examples of organizations benefitting from volunteer drivers include the York County Community Action Corporation (YCCAC) in Maine, which uses a volunteer driver base to help provide long distance trips and to meet overall customer demand. Prairie Hills Transit in rural South Dakota provides vehicles for their volunteer drivers to use to supplement their paid driver services (47). In 2010, the Beverly Foundation conducted a survey of 66 entities that provide transportation to the elderly seeking input on low cost solutions to providing said service. Using volunteer staff and drivers was one of the top past, present, and anticipated future cost-cutting measures identified by the group (32).

VTC national survey respondents that indicated they experienced difficulty implementing a volunteer driver program reported that the top two reasons were lack of potential volunteer response and insurance issues. New Jersey faces these same issues with volunteer driver programs. In 2010, a coalition comprised of representatives from the Governor's Advisory Council on Volunteerism, the New Jersey Council on Access and Mobility workgroup, and the New Jersey State Association of Jewish Federations among others was convened by the New Jersey Foundation for Aging to discuss addressing the insurance barriers to volunteer recruitment for community transportation programs. Many states including Florida, New Hampshire, Maine, and Oregon have successfully worked in recent years to address insurance barriers to volunteer drivers.

Recognizing that personal mobility is an important component of quality of life and that New Jersey's transportation disadvantaged community could benefit from the additional transport options a volunteer driver base could offer, the coalition developed legislation designed to meet several primary goals. First, the legislation seeks to protect volunteer drivers from vehicle insurance rate increases, denial, and/or dropping of insurance coverage, as well as from insurance surcharges imposed solely due to their status as a volunteer driver. Second, the legislation seeks to include volunteer drivers under the state's existing volunteer immunity clause. Third, legislation seeks to allow a provider's insurance coverage to become the primary insurance, if needed, for a volunteer driver. The bill was introduced in the New Jersey Senate as Bill No. 2249 in 2010 and efforts continue

to promote its passage as a vital means to eliminate barriers for volunteer driver recruitment in New Jersey (49). The research team recommends addressing the insurance barriers for volunteer drivers detailed above, which will increase the viability of volunteer driver programs in the state. These volunteer driver programs can increase transportation options, as well as offer cost savings to county transportation providers who opt to use volunteer drivers, even in a limited capacity.

Private Sector Support

Pursuing financial support from private sector entities located in the community was a strategy mentioned by several survey respondents and stakeholder interviewees. Shopping/retail facilities were discussed as potential sources of this type of funding support. In New Jersey, Monmouth County paratransit has received annual contributions from a food store and a hospital corporation that support the fixed route services providing transportation to these local destinations. Medical Motors, a nonprofit transportation provider serving special needs populations in Rochester, New York, explained in a 2010 webinar presentation how they benefit from the financial support received from their local Wegmans food store, which they transport customers to/from weekly (47). If seeking to pursue this strategy, it is recommended that requests be directed to the community relations/corporate office of such entities.

In addition to pursuing support from the shopping/retail sector who benefit from the customers county community transportation providers bring to their facilities to shop, private support could also be sought from corporate partners who need their employees to have a reliable mode to reach their work site. For example, Bergen County discussed working to develop partnerships with local office park businesses so that the latter will agree to help financially support county transportation to the site when the current CMAQ funding stream supporting services ends. On the national scene, Baltimore's Sunrise Shuttle program provides transportation service for employees of businesses within the BWI Business Partnership, located in central Maryland. Businesses in the district contribute financially to help support the service (50).

A related topic of seeking financial support from medical dialysis centers is discussed under the Legislative and Regulatory Opportunities recommendation category presented later in this chapter.

Service Contracts

Many county providers have instituted service contracts with both public and private partners, including their local Arc and other nonprofits, adult day centers, and municipalities. Other county providers should consider adopting this strategy. When developing service contracts with municipalities, Camden County described the benefits of such action as a "win-win" strategy because the arrangement provides needed revenue to the county while helping municipalities meet the transportation needs of their residents without having to purchase and maintain costly vehicles. Counties have the equipment and capacity to provide these services, as well as the expertise in scheduling and operations.

A few counties reported that they maintain purchase of service contracts with state government entities such as the NJ Department of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DVRS) and eighteen of the twenty-one counties have contracts with the NJ Department of Military and Veterans Affairs (DMVA). All counties should consider the benefits of service contracts with public entities and seek guidance from counties who have experience with these relationships, such as Somerset, Hunterdon, Mercer, and Middlesex counties. In addition, discussion with state government entities such as

DMVA is needed to renegotiate the existing payment structure as it fails to cover a significant portion of service costs.

More county transportation providers should establish service contracts with the state's non-emergency Medicaid transportation broker, LogistiCare. As of July 2012, only four county providers have entered into contract with LogistiCare: Hudson, Middlesex, Sussex, and Union. However, since 2012, six additional counties have begun negotiation with LogistiCare. Some New Jersey providers expressed reluctance to partner with LogistiCare because they are not satisfied with the reimbursement rates offered by the latter. Respondents to the VTC national survey also reported that the reimbursement rates were inadequate. Among respondents who indicated they had difficulties providing Medicaid contract services, the most cited reason for those difficulties was a reimbursement rate that was too low, reported by over 75% of these respondents.

Despite the reimbursement rate issue, partnering with LogistiCare offers county providers the opportunity to add Medicaid trips to existing vehicle runs serving non-Medicaid customers traveling to the same destination at least several days per week, such as subscription trips to kidney dialysis centers. This action allows county providers to increase their productivity per hour, while earning revenue with minimal additional costs incurred (10). To benefit from the economies of scale and efficiencies partnering with LogistiCare can offer, county providers should avoid scheduling Medicaid single occupant trips.

Legislation & Regulatory Opportunities

A variety of legislative and regulatory opportunities exist that could help to alleviate the economic difficulties experienced by county community transportation providers. Some were discussed in earlier recommendations and include legislation to address barriers to volunteer driver recruitment and pursuit of a mandatory fare program. Other potential legislative and/or regulatory opportunities are described below.

Federal Anti-Kickback Legislation

As described earlier in the non-grant funding recommendation category, county community transportation providers should seek funding support from private entities, including local businesses that benefit either directly or indirectly from the services county community transportation providers offer community residents. Dialysis facilities are one type of private entity county paratransit providers should pursue for financial support.

All county providers interviewed discussed the increased demand for medical and dialysis trips among their respective customer bases. Dialysis trips in particular provide those customers in need with access to critical life sustaining treatment. Meeting demand for dialysis service, which typically requires three or more round trips per patient per week, is extremely difficult to provide in this reduced funding environment. Ocean County paratransit for example has suspended any additional dialysis runs since January 2010 (19).

Financial support from dialysis centers would greatly aid the ability of county community transportation providers to continue meeting the growing dialysis service demand but centers have refused such support due to their interpretation of federal anti-kickback legislation. Specifically, private dialysis centers cite The Medicare and Medicaid Patient Protection Act of 1987, also known

as the anti-kickback statute, as justification for their refusal to contribute to the cost of patient transportation. This broad statute was designed to reduce Medicare and Medicaid-related medical fraud.

The Office of the Inspector General (OIG) has developed a variety of safe harbor provisions to protect legitimate business interests from criminal prosecution under the statute (11). Going forward, it would be useful for CMS to provide a written interpretation of the safe harbor provisions with regard to private dialysis center support for local transportation services. If that goal cannot be readily achieved, a formal appeal can be made to OIG as referenced in the 1999 final ruling on safe harbor provisions: "In accordance with section 205 of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) of 1996 (Pub. L. 104-191), the Department is now required to develop and publish an annual notice in the Federal Register formally soliciting proposals for modifying existing safe harbors and promulgating new safe harbors and OIG special fraud alerts. The Department will review the proposals and, in consultation with the Department of Justice (DoJ), consider issuing new or deviated safe harbor regulations, where appropriate" (11).

New Jersey Department of Transportation (DOT) Autobus Regulations

In 1992 New Jersey passed legislation exempting vehicles of paratransit operators serving people with disabilities, persons aged 60 and older, and clients of social service agencies from the state Department of Transportation's autobus designation, regardless of whether a fare or donation policy was in place. This law prevented paratransit operators from having to undergo costly vehicle retrofitting and incur other costs that would have been required to meet DOT autobus regulations. Since 1992 however, county paratransit providers have expanded their services to include customers from the general public due to grant opportunities presented through New Freedom and JARC grants, among others.

As they are no longer providing service only to people with disabilities and the elderly, county providers are once again potentially subject to DOT autobus operator regulations if they elect to charge a mandatory fare. To address this problem, Assembly Bill No. 2595 was introduced in February 2012 and seeks to alter the current definition of "special paratransit vehicles" to be based on vehicle weight instead of solely on the type of customer served (51). Passage of legislation to extend the exemption of county paratransit vehicles from DOT autobus regulations, regardless of their customers served is an action that will not only yield cost savings to county providers but also meets with federal United We Ride goals of promoting shared services and coordination and the elimination of operating silos based on customer characteristics.

Determination of a New Dedicated Funding Source

A new dedicated funding source should be determined for New Jersey's county community transportation providers, as SCDRTAP funding and other frequently relied upon funding programs and strategies can no longer adequately help county providers meet the increasing demand and related costs of service. Many states and local governments have pursued a variety of dedicated funding sources to support transportation including lottery proceeds and sales, property, and fuel taxes (12).

Authors of a 2003 study explain that local option transportation taxes have been a trend for over 40 years and report that 33 states have authorized local option sales taxes for transportation purposes (52). Some recent examples of these dedicated funding sources include the half-cent sales tax for

public transit approved in St. Louis County, Missouri (53). A best practice cited in this report is the city of Corvallis, Oregon that enacted a transportation utility fee paid by residential, commercial, and industrial customers that supports city transportation options. New Jersey should also examine the feasibility of using a dedicated tax, most likely a sales tax, to support community transportation. As described by Goldman and Wachs, sales taxes are often attractive because of their broad base, "...which enables it to produce high revenue for a low marginal tax rate" (52). Using 2005 National Transit Database data, authors of TCRP Report 129 found that sales taxes serve as a major revenue source among transportation systems of all sizes, further demonstrating the potential utility of pursuing a dedicated sales tax strategy in New Jersey (54).

As an alternative, the state should consider other revenue sources. NJ COST recommends in their *Stranded in New Jersey* report that a portion of the New Jersey lottery proceeds should be dedicated to a community transportation fund (2). Pennsylvania offers an example of a state where the lottery funds programs for older residents, including free transit and reduced fare shared rides (55).

To determine the most appropriate dedicated funding source to benefit New Jersey's county community transportation providers, an ad hoc advisory committee should be convened comprised of key stakeholders including but not limited to the county providers, NJ COST, NJ TRANSIT, as well as a representative from the New Jersey Department of the Treasury – Division of Taxation. The group should seek data from states imposing similar taxes to those under consideration in New Jersey and should fully examine equity issues associated with pursuit of any consumer tax approach. Recommendations should be determined and disseminated widely so implementation strategies can be pursued. As advised in TCRP Report 129, a variety of components are typically part of successful efforts to institute new funding sources for transportation, which include fully describing the proposed revenue sources to be pursued in detail, with the rationale for their selection explained (54). The ad hoc advisory committee should review the other recommendations included in TCRP Report 129 regarding best practices in campaigning for new funding sources to support transportation.

Match Issues: A Dialogue with FTA

Due to the numerous concerns expressed by New Jersey county community transportation providers regarding their inability to meet FTA match requirements, particularly the 50% operation match requirements, it is recommended New Jersey stakeholders enter into a dialogue with FTA on these concerns. New Jersey stakeholders should seek assistance from entities such as CTAA when developing a strategy for this action. While results are likely to be long term, documenting these concerns with FTA is a critical step toward achieving the end goal of more desirable policy and legislation regarding match funding. Two prevalent match issues to discuss are:

- **Match eligibility.** County providers and respondents to the VTC national survey suggested expanding sources of local match to include fare box revenue, which is not eligible for FTA programs including 5310, New Freedom, and JARC programs. A survey respondent opined the monthly parking rent his agency pays the city should be eligible as a local match but under current regulations it is not. Another survey respondent explained that while maintenance is accepted as a capital cost expenditure for the 5307 program, fuel and insurance are not eligible. Options for altering these regulations should be discussed with FTA.

- Match percentage. Discussions with the 21 county providers confirmed that very few applied for federal FY2010 New Freedom funding due to difficulties in securing the requisite 50% operations matching fund support. Paratransit stakeholders should explore the possibility of reducing the 50% operating match requirement at the federal level by discussing this and other related issues further with FTA.

Operational Efficiencies

Promoting operational efficiencies and measures is an important recommendation and is one that each of New Jersey's county providers has been pursuing and should continue to pursue. The focus of the following recommendations is optimization of existing resources so as to yield much needed cost savings. Specific measures to achieve this recommendation include:

Using Technology

Many interviewees discussed the efficiency-related benefits of using technological tools and applications and to the extent county providers determine their usage will yield improved efficiencies, their purchase should be considered. Meadowlink TMA for example reported that all their vehicles have GPS, mobile data computers, and in-vehicle video surveillance. NJ TRANSIT cited improved efficiencies and overall productivity gained by using routing and scheduling software. Both Middlesex and Sussex Counties have implemented Google Transit for their fixed route services. Google Transit is a feature of Google Maps that enables a customer to identify the walking and transit connections from an origin to a destination using any transit services that participate in the Google Transit network worldwide. In both counties, the project was implemented through collaboration with their respective Planning (Middlesex) and Information Services (Sussex) departments that developed the GIS files required by Google.

As Lave and Mathias explained, "In general, technology makes possible many enhancements that could improve service and lower costs. Among the notable possibilities are automatic communication with riders during trip reservation and just before pickup, transfer coordination, and use of real-time traffic conditions in scheduling and dispatching" (56). Another benefit related to technology tools is that they can support coordination efforts, as exemplified in the best practice example provided in this report of Colorado's Longmont Call-N-Ride Pilot Program.

In this time of economic constraint, the question arises as to how county providers can fund some of these technological purchases. One way is to seek grant funding for the purchase. For example, Meadowlink sought and received federal Sec. 5310 funding to purchase software to facilitate online scheduling and dispatch. Morris County also noted pursuing grants opportunities to expand their technological capabilities.

Coordination

Coordination is a concept well known to county community transportation providers and should continue to be pursued. The federal emphasis on promoting coordination in recent years through the United We Ride effort resulted in county providers each developing a coordinated human services transportation plan. As Burkhardt proposes, "A technique for better resource management, coordination means working together with people from different agencies and backgrounds. It requires shared power – shared responsibility, management, and funding. Many transportation

functions can be coordinated, including planning, purchasing, vehicle operations, maintenance, and marketing” (13). A recent webinar on the topic of increasing transportation options for persons with disabilities echoed Burkhart’s sentiments regarding the broad array of resources and functions that could potentially be coordinated, with speakers adding that information and technology coordination are also feasible approaches to consider (6).

Potential benefits of coordination include generation of additional revenue, enhanced mobility, increased efficiency and productivity, improved service quality, as well as other economic and management benefits (13). While all of these potential benefits are attractive to New Jersey’s county community transportation providers, they are also concerned about the impediments and challenges inherent in coordination efforts. For example, over half of the VTC national survey respondents who reported experiencing difficulties with coordination efforts indicated resistance by other agencies to coordination was an issue and over 40% mentioned difficulty in establishing a workable cost sharing agreement.

Stakeholders interviewed for this study also cited other coordination challenges of concern. Depending on the type of coordination activity being pursued, obstacles could involve issues such as vehicle size and wheelchair capacity when seeking to share services. Another related concern involves insurance issues associated with sharing of vehicles. Determining how to address a failure on the part of one of the partners in providing one segment of a trip (e.g. no show; late or early arrival) also needs to be determined. Yet another challenge involves ensuring that the coordinating entities utilize a similar approach to determine the most appropriate cost sharing plan. One interviewee remarked the scale of a given operation in terms of its organizational and administrative structure can be a significant factor in promoting or inhibiting coordination efforts.

Despite these challenges, there are positive coordination activities occurring in New Jersey. The nonprofit organization The Arc, NJ TRANSIT Access Link, and Gloucester County paratransit have partnered to reduce service duplication to a specific sheltered workshop site. These three providers are working together on a pilot effort to identify overlap in their respective services so that customers can be redistributed where feasible. Improving services in this regard could positively impact service features including reliability and yield cost savings.

This kind of coordination could be more widespread. New Jersey county community transportation providers should examine the possibility of coordinating county trips with NJ TRANSIT Access Link service as well as explore coordination among neighboring county providers.

To increase the likelihood of successful coordination, early and frequent communication among partners is needed. To combat the abstract and elusive nature of coordination, potential partners should strategize and plan specific and tangible strategies to be pursued. If services are to be coordinated, a mapping effort that addresses detail on vehicle fleets, service hours in use, service territory covered, etc. should be undertaken. Issues including respective fare policies, as well as other service components such as trip type (e.g. curb-to-curb, door-to-door, etc.) must also be discussed. Also, pursuing a coordination effort as a pilot study and implementation is a wise strategy to consider, since pilot efforts are typically time limited and generally impose fewer obstacles in securing funding support.

Some final recommendations on coordination come from findings of a 2004 analysis of transportation coordination efforts in three states. The author found that the state’s role was a key

factor in the success of local transportation coordination (57). Offering technical assistance in the form of creating a coordination guidebook or offering a state liaison's expertise to local providers and requiring or providing a full time transportation coordinator were determined to be critical to coordination efforts. In New Jersey, NJ TRANSIT has provided support to the county providers in creating their respective coordinated service plans and by acting as a conduit of valuable funding and other related information. To enable more robust and consistent coordination efforts among the county providers, NJ TRANSIT and the counties should seek funding support to secure two to three regional mobility managers who will work with county providers to implement coordination solutions among counties and other local transportation services. Recognizing that coordination efforts hold the potential to yield both cost savings for the agency and improved services for customers should incentivize the state to provide some, if not all, of the funding needed to support these regional mobility managers at least for a pilot period.

Service Diversity

A key strategy to creating economies of scale lies in offering a diverse array of service options, which can reduce reliance on costly single occupant trips. Specific means of achieving this goal include developing deviated fixed route and fixed route services, implementing feeder service to other transit options, and developing central transfer points. Offering county transportation services that connect to other transit options and that serve major trip generators in a given community are strategies that greatly help to achieve the two-fold role of community transportation as described in the beginning of this chapter – to offer a diverse array of services that connect to other transit options which increases customer access and mobility and continuing to serve those most in need of community transportation.

All New Jersey county providers interviewed either offer feeder service or support the institution of such service if demand warrants. Those counties employing transit feeder service agreed this approach offers a valuable means to expand service areas and options for customers while providing cost efficiencies to service providers. Several consumer focus group participants expressed support for feeder service. These informants reported using county transportation services as a feeder to reach public transit and noted that such service allowed them to reach employment opportunities in counties beyond their residence. Examples of feeder services offered by county providers include but are not limited to: Burlington County's BurLink, a deviated fixed route service that connects NJ TRANSIT buses and the RiverLINE light rail stations; Morris County's Morris on the Move shuttle, which offers many transfer points and connects with NJT bus and rail stops/stations; and Sussex County's New Freedom funded, on-request shuttle service that connects to the Newton park-and-ride and the Netcong train station.

With regard to deviated fixed routes/fixed routes, again county providers interviewed strongly supported this strategy and acknowledged it provides an excellent way to serve important local and regional trip generators, including employment sites, and often contributes to reduced costs. All county providers in the central region reported using deviated fixed route shuttle services and experiencing success with this type of service. Middlesex County has completed implementation of a seven route deviated fixed route system that provides feeder service to key NJ TRANSIT bus and rail services. The county services are designed to connect residential locations where people with disabilities reside to retail and other employment destinations that would be accessed by people with disabilities. Several counties in the southern region are also using deviated fixed routes/shuttles

and in the north, Warren, Sussex and Essex (via their contract with Meadowlink) offer deviated fixed route service. As county providers seek to continue implementing this type of service, they should devote significant attention to the route planning process so they can proactively plan to meet the trip needs of their targeted customer base.

Other Efficiency Inducing Measures

Several other efficiency measures were identified through the interviews and national survey effort and should continue to be considered by New Jersey's county community transportation providers. It should be noted some of these strategies are solely focused on cost savings. They include:

- Eliminate non-essential spending, including driver overtime.
- Strive to function as a mobility manager to customers, effectively helping them determine the best strategies to reach desired destinations, which may include mass transit. This strategy will serve both the interests of the transportation provider as well as customers. Be advised that mobility management is an eligible capital expense under most FTA programs, which means that FTA can fund 80% of mobility management expenses.
- Create and/or enforce customer no show policies, which can contribute to service efficiency and yield cost savings. Findings from METRO Magazine's 2011 nationwide paratransit provider survey revealed 87% of respondents utilize a customer no-show policy and found the policy helps to increase productivity and efficiency while reducing no-show rates and related suspensions (4).
- Examine the "fit" between services rendered and funding available so as to optimize utilization of all funding sources as they have different match and usage requirements. For example, if a provider is supporting service X with SCDRTAP funds and wants to use those funds towards service Z instead, the provider should determine if service X could be supported by another funding stream. New Freedom considers a service new if it was created post August 2005, so if service X meets that criteria, it may be able to be supported by the provider's New Freedom grant, thus allowing SCDRTAP funds to be redirected to service Z.
- Purchase NJ TRANSIT or private carrier bus/rail tickets/passes to encourage public transit usage and familiarity, the use of which can yield cost savings for county providers. Currently, few New Jersey county community transportation providers or VTC national survey respondents reported pursuing this strategy. While this approach presents obvious limitations in rural areas, pursuing it in suburban and urban locales is feasible because the NJ TRANSIT system is very accessible for persons with disabilities – all buses are accessible, most light rail stations are accessible, and over 70 rail stations are accessible.
- Support travel training efforts as a critical means to encourage persons to safely and independently utilize public transit. County providers should implement travel training programs with the state's travel training experts, NJ TIP, Inc., as one means to encourage efficiency inducing public transit usage.
- Create purchasing consortiums among counties for expenses including fuel, vehicles, and insurance. Counties can buy tax exempt fuel and if they are using private or nonprofit

contractors, they can benefit from the price advantage of providing the fuel to the contractor at cost.

Employment-Focused for Persons with Disabilities

While the recommendations presented in this chapter were developed with the goal of supporting all county community transportation providers and their transportation disadvantaged customers, specific emphasis throughout the report has been on how county community transportation services can better meet the transportation needs of persons with disabilities seeking employment transportation. Several recommendations are included below in this regard. It must be noted that for any of these specific recommendations to be achieved by the New Jersey county paratransit provider community, the difficult financial circumstances under which they are currently operating need to be addressed.

- Expand county community transportation service hours and days to better meet the employment travel needs of persons with disabilities in the state. Study focus group participants explained that limited service hours was a main reason they need to use multiple travel modes to access employment. As demonstrated in a 2010 VTC statewide survey of persons with disability seeking employment, the top five employment sectors respondents wanted to find work in were administration, sales, care, food, and service (26). Non-traditional work hours, including nights and weekends, are typical in the sales, food, and service sectors. If county community transportation does not offer service during non-traditional hours, the likelihood of meeting the employment travel needs of persons with disabilities will remain significantly impaired.
- Explore how to better serve “first and last mile” trip needs, which can cover the gap in services that often exists between one’s home, the transit station/stop, and workplace. County providers must consider the locations of major employment generators when planning deviated fixed route services so they can adequately provide service to those locations and alleviate any hindrances customers experience while traveling the “first or last mile.”
- Support efforts to improve land use and transportation coordination. Many of the obstacles county community transportation providers encounter in meeting service demand among persons with disability seeking work and other transportation disadvantaged customers are due to land use and planning conditions, not only the current economic environment. Often large employers are located in remote locales, far from employee residences and in areas offering little to no access to public transit. The state of New Jersey has a vested interest in promoting job and housing development at sites accessible to public transportation. The federal government, for one, supports improving the linkage between housing and employment. In their Fiscal Year 2013 Program and Budgets Initiative, HUD discusses the concept of supporting communities in creating “geographies of opportunity”, which promote connections between all elements of a given community including housing, jobs, schools, etc. (58). Going forward, New Jersey needs to support efforts to improve existing land use patterns so that the transportation disadvantaged have more, not fewer, viable transportation options.

Implementation Matrix

To assist New Jersey county community transportation providers and other stakeholders determine potential partners with whom to collaborate and to further discussion on suggested recommendations, an implementation matrix was created and is presented below. The matrix is intended as a tool to help interested parties begin the process of connecting with the most appropriate partner organization(s). Please be informed that while the matrix was designed as an inclusive document, there are likely other potential partner organizations the research team was not aware of and who are consequently not listed. Thus, it is up to the discretion of the stakeholder audience who use the matrix to add other appropriate partner organizations as they see fit.

In Closing

Moving forward, New Jersey county providers and other similar providers nationwide should consider a recent quotation shared by the Vice President of Grants & Special Initiatives at the previously mentioned New Jersey-based Henry H. Kessler Foundation. In discussing the challenges facing her organization and other similar entities, Ms. Katz offered the following:

"The way of doing 'business' has changed, and yes, nonprofit agencies are running a business. These days that means having adequate cash flow, funding diversification, succession plans and leadership development, financial and other automated systems to support programs and fundraising.

This all requires organizations to take a moment to step back and strategically evaluate their operations, reaffirm missions, look at strengths/opportunities, challenges and determine future organizational goals/objectives. Without taking the time to develop a plan, even a very simple one - as a track to run on - you will be facing a very difficult future."

While Ms. Katz's remarks were targeted to nonprofit agencies, the sentiments shared hold true for county transportation providers as well. Similar to many organizations around the country, the economic recession has driven New Jersey county provider agencies to the realization many need to develop a new way of "doing business" if they are to survive, thrive, and successfully meet the challenges in a brave new funding world. In their quest to continue providing services to the transportation disadvantaged and in determining what coping strategies could best meet their agency and customer needs, each must now carefully evaluate their respective organization's strengths and weaknesses in order to identify the best opportunities for service continuation, enhancement, and expansion.

Recommendations Matrix

NOTE: * = potential leadership partner † = potential supporting partner

RECOMMENDATIONS	COUNTIES	NJ TRANSIT	NJ COST	MPOs	TMA's	OTHERS
PROGRAM EVALUATION						
Initiate and/or strengthen program evaluation efforts to determine the economic costs, benefits, and social impacts of the services provided by county transportation providers	*	*	*	†	†	CTAA †
GRANT FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES						
Pursue new and/or atypical federal funding opportunities	*	†		†		
Seek out grant opportunities with and from nonprofit entities	*	†		†		
Establish optimum connectivity between those knowledgeable about new funding opportunities and the county transportation provider community	*	*	*	*	†	NJ DOT †
Meet with CTAA's Institute for Transportation Coordination to discuss new funding opportunities and strategies pursued by other states	†	*	†			CTAA †
Develop a grant seeking & writing course for county paratransit providers		*				NTI *
Create a resource guide on pursuing new or alternative funding strategies for county paratransit providers		*	*			
Explore potential sources of public match support not often used by county paratransit providers	*	*		*		
Explore feasibility of using Toll Credits (TCs) as match support for eligible federal projects		*	*	*		NJ DOT * FTA Regional Office 2 †
Pursue in-kind match support	*	†		*		
NON-GRANT FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES						
Pursue bus advertising to supplement revenue as feasible	*	†				
Institute a uniform mandatory fare program across all counties	*	†	†			NJ Legislature *
Address the vehicle insurance barriers that affect volunteer driver recruitment	†		†			NJ Legislature * Nonprofits †
Supplement paid drivers with volunteer drivers	*	†			†	
Seek private sector support including that of area retailers and large employers	*	†		†		
Initiate service contracts with public and private partners, including LogistiCare	*	†	†	†		
Renegotiate payment rates with public and private partners as needed to more fully cover county provider service costs	*	*		†		

NOTE: * = potential leadership partner † = potential supporting partner

RECOMMENDATIONS	COUNTIES	NJTRANSIT	NJ COST	MPOs	TMA s	OTHERS
LEGISLATION & REGULATORY OPPORTUNITIES						
Obtain CMS and/or OIG formal interpretation of the safe harbor provisions to determine if funding support can be sought from dialysis centers		*				NJ Department of Human Services *
Seek continued exemption of county paratransit provider vehicles from DOT autobus regulations		*	*			NJ Legislature *
Establish an ad hoc advisory committee to determine new dedicated funding source	†	*	†	†		New Jersey Department of the Treasury – Division of Taxation †
Foster a dialogue with FTA on match issues	*	*	*	†	†	CTAA †
OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCIES						
Utilize new and existing technologies	*					
Seek out coordination opportunities to generate economic benefits and service efficiencies	*	†		†	†	Nonprofits †
Secure full time regional mobility managers to facilitate coordination efforts for and among the county providers	*	*				NJ DOT *
Implement services that promote economies of scale including modified fixed routes, feeder service, and central transfer points	*	†		†	†	
Eliminate non-essential spending, including driver overtime	*					
Create or enforce customer no show policies	*					
Maximize external funding by matching each grant funded program to optimal funding source	*	†		†		FTA Regional Office 2 †
Purchase NJ Transit or private carrier bus/rail tickets/passes	*	†				
Support travel training for customers	*	†				NJ TIP, Inc. †
Create county purchasing consortiums for fuel, vehicles, and insurance, etc.	*	†				
EMPLOYMENT FOCUSED FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES						
Expand county paratransit service hours and days to better meet the employment travel needs of persons with disabilities	*					
Explore how to better meet “last mile” service needs	*	†			†	
Support efforts to improve existing land use patterns so that the transportation disadvantaged have more viable transportation options						NJ Department of State – Office of Planning Advocacy *

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