



## Summary of Data Collection Efforts

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This chapter presents a summary of data collection efforts for transportation providers. LSC Transportation Consultants, Inc. subcontracted with the Center for Advanced Social Research, School of Journalism, University of Missouri - Columbia, to provide assistance in the collection of agency information. The Center has the resources available to efficiently mail and provide follow-up phone calls to agencies and organizations. The following section outlines the process for collecting the needed information from agencies to complete this coordination initiative.



### INITIAL AGENCY SELECTION

As mentioned previously, it was determined that there were two distinct categories of agencies which would need to be contacted for information. The first category developed included those agencies which provide transportation as a primary function. Only two agencies—Columbia Transit and OATS—were deemed to provide transportation as their primary function. The second category of agencies were those who were identified to provide, at least in some respect, transportation as a function of their agency. This transportation is provided primarily to agency clients. “Client” is being defined loosely as that portion of the public which is served by the agency or organization. Typically, if a person was not being served by the agency, they would not be provided transportation. Examples of agencies include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Churches
- Day cares
- Schools
- Medical facilities
- Senior service facilities
- State or local human service agencies

## **DEVELOPMENT OF QUESTIONNAIRES**

The development of suitable questionnaires was an important aspect of data collection. Several rounds of questionnaire development occurred between LSC and the Steering Committee. The final questionnaires are presented in Appendix A. Two separate questionnaires were developed for transit providers and human service providers. Many of the same questions are used in both questionnaires. The questionnaires were designed to:

- Determine the level of transportation provided;
- Determine the amount of financial resources available for the provision of transportation services;
- Determine the clientele supported by services;
- Identify both short- and long-term agency needs; and
- Identify support for coordination.

The questionnaires also asked several open-ended questions where respondents had the opportunity to provide additional information. The questionnaires were designed using previous experience with agency questionnaire design by LSC and resources provided through the Transit Cooperative Research Program.

Questions were also posed with multiple choice answers. These types of questions allow for some comparability across providers. However, the diversity of the agencies, the types of transportation needs, available resources, and other factors limit the amount of comparability.

### **Letter of Support**

A Letter of Support was drafted by the Steering Committee for use as a tool to gain support and lend credibility for the data collection efforts. This was seen as a vital element of supporting information to encourage the agencies to fill out and return the questionnaire. Appendix B presents a copy of the final letter enclosed in each mailed-out questionnaire. The letter was cosigned by the Mayor of Columbia and a Boone County Commissioner.

## **COORDINATION OF DATA COLLECTION EFFORTS**

Questionnaires were mailed out from CASR on Monday, September 19, 2005. A week-long deadline was given to agencies and organizations to return the questionnaire to CASR. Questionnaires could be returned by mail, fax, or e-mail. Follow-up phone calls were made on September 22, 2005. On September 23, 2005 numerous questionnaires were returned with the wrong address and were subsequently hand-delivered to the correct location. One was returned marked "Return to Sender." On September 27, 2005, eleven surveys were returned, four were re-sent out to respondents via e-mail. On September 30, 2005, 53 surveys had been returned of the 117 sent out. A second round of phone calls ensued, and two more had to be hand-delivered when the respondents had lost or misplaced the originals. On October 4, 2005, 13 more were received via fax and mail. A total of 75 usable questionnaires were received and entered into a database for analysis. Appendix D presents the disposition and follow-up efforts documented by CASR and LSC.