



## CHAPTER IV

# Stakeholder Interviews

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### INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to summarize input from paratransit stakeholders. Stakeholder involvement is important since most of the stakeholders will work daily with the results of this study. Therefore, the Planning Team needs to know their ideas and concerns about coordinating transit efforts. LSC staff has been able to interview seven of the nineteen individuals representing organizations which were recommended by Pace as possible stakeholders in the development of the Paratransit Coordination study for Lake County. Table IV-I lists the agencies to be interviewed along with a contact person for the agency. The individuals interviewed are key decision makers in providing service to the transit-dependent community and represent transportation providers, local government, and social service organizations. So far, the Planning Team has been able to interview representatives from the Center for Independent Living which works predominantly with senior citizens, Elder Care at Christ Church whose goal is to provide volunteer services to seniors in northern Lake County so that they can remain at their home, Getting to Work in Lake County which helps low-income individuals find jobs, Lake County Coordinated Transportation Services Committee which is made up of individuals that care about providing multimodal transportation for the community, Lake County Senior Services Coalition, Ela Township which operates a paratransit service for elderly and disabled individuals in the township, and the Lake County Department of Transportation. The interviews were conducted in person or over the telephone. Each person was asked the same questions and given the opportunity to provide additional insight or information. Below is the list of questions asked and a summary of the responses.

#### **What issues arise concerning Pace operations for the people you serve?**

Many of the people interviewed expressed issues with reserving trips. Those serving elderly and disabled individuals say some of their clients have difficulty getting their calls through to make a reservation and once the call does go

through, they are unable to get the trip time they wanted. Agencies representing low-income individuals state that clients have an issue with using the Pace service to get to work in the new employment centers in suburban Lake County.

**Whom do you coordinate transportation/ride with? What other organizations/agencies?**

Most of the service agencies interviewed do coordinate transportation efforts as well as other services. Grant, Antioch, and Lake Villa Townships have coordinated their paratransit services so that citizens can travel to locations in each township. Several senior service agencies coordinate transit trips with the American Cancer Society as well as with Pace and even the Great Lakes Naval Station for medical trips.

**Who pays for the transportation services for your clients, and how much does your organization/agency help with the cost?**

Of those interviewed so far, several social service agencies depend on volunteers to provide transportation for their clients. Some agencies ask for donations from their clients using transportation. The Township transit operators interviewed use general fund money to operate their paratransit service and have a one-way cash fare that customers pay to use the service. Ela Township has received vehicles from Pace at no or minimal charge.

**Describe the clients you serve—what types of disabilities, travel limitations, issues with their travel needs.**

The social service agencies and the providers interviewed so far deal with clients that are elderly, disabled, or both. Principal travel needs are door-through-door service, ADA-equipped vehicles, and short travel times.

**Where are your clients/populations you serve needing to travel to?**

Most clients need to travel by transit to medical offices, hospitals, work, educational classes, and shopping areas.

**Table IV-I  
Stakeholders for the Lake County Paratransit Coordination Study**

ORGANIZATION	CONTACT PERSON	ORGANIZATION TYPE	INTERVIEW DATE	NOTES
CATHOLIC CHARITIES	CHRIS EDWARDS	SERVICES FOR LOW INCOME	NA	WILL CONTINUE TO SET INTERVIEW DATE
CENTER FOR ENRICHED LIVING	NO CONTACT NAME	SERVES THE DISABLED	NA	WILL CONTINUE TO SET INTERVIEW DATE
CENTER FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING	KELLI BROOKS	SERVES SENIOR CITIZENS	June 14, 2007	
COMMUNITY ACTION PARTNERSHIP	MARY LOCKHART WHITE	SERVICES FOR LOW INCOME	NA	WILL CONTINUE TO SET INTERVIEW DATE
COUNTRYSIDE ASSOCIATION	WAYNE KULICK	SERVES THE DISABLED	NA	WILL CONTINUE TO SET INTERVIEW DATE
ELDER CARE AT CHRIST CHURCH	MARY ELLEN SAUNDERS	SERVICES FOR SENIOR CITIZENS	June 13, 2007	
GETTING TO WORK IN LAKE COUNTY	TOM CHEFALO	SERVICES FOR LOW INCOME	June 11, 2007	
LAKE CO. COORDINATED TRANS. COMM.	KAY STAROSTOVIC	TO PROVIDE BETTER TRANSIT OPTIONS	June 12, 2007	ALSO TALKED ABOUT GRANT TWP TRANSIT
LAKE CO.SENIOR SERVICES COALITION	JOYCE PALMQUIST	SERVICES FOR SENIOR CITIZENS	June 11, 2007	
MANO A MANO FAMILY RESOURCE CENTER	CAROLINA DUQUE	SERVICES FOR LATINOS	NA	WILL CONTINUE TO SET INTERVIEW DATE
NORTHPOINTE ACHIEVEMENT CENTER	NO CONTACT NAME	SERVES THE DISABLED	NA	PERSON FOR INTERVIEW ON VACATION
SPECIAL EDUCATION DISTRICT OF LAKE CO.	BARRY GODSEY	SERVES THE DISABLED	NA	WILL CONTINUE TO SET INTERVIEW DATE
UNITED WAY OF LAKE COUNTY	TED BYERS	SOCIAL SERVICES FUNDING PROVIDER	NA	WILL CONTINUE TO SET INTERVIEW DATE
LAILAW-GRAYSLAKE	NO CONTACT NAME	PARATRANSIT SERVICE OPERATOR	NA	WILL BE INTERVIEWED IN NEAR FUTURE
ELA TOWNSHIP	PAM SAUBERT	PARATRANSIT SERVICE OPERATOR	June 12, 2007	
LAMBS FARM	FRANK MELCHERT	SERVES THE DEVELOPMENTALY DISABLED	NA	PERSON FOR INTERVIEW ON VACATION
CITY OF HIGHLAND PARK	PAULA CYPHERS	SERVICES FOR SENIOR CITIZENS	NA	PERSON FOR INTERVIEW ON VACATION
LAKE COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT	PATRICIA DONALD	HEALTH CARE FOR LOW INCOME	NA	WILL CONTINUE TO SET INTERVIEW DATE
LAKE COUNTY DOT	BRUCE CHRISTIANSON	GOVERNMENTAL AGENCY FOR TRANS.	June 12, 2007	
LAKE FOREST HOSPITAL	KIM SJOBLAD	HEALTH CARE FOR LOW INCOME	NA	WILL CONTINUE TO SET INTERVIEW DATE

**What types of trips do your clients primarily need? (work/shopping/medical, other)**

Primarily, transit service is needed for medical appointments, personal services such as going to the hairdresser, and shopping trips. Some seniors and disabled persons need transit service to get to work and educational classes.

**How has mobility improved or worsened for your clientele in the last several years?**

Answers to this question focused mainly on how mobility has worsened over the past several years due to the prodigious population growth in Lake County (approximately 10,000 new residents each year) placing a strain on the county's infrastructure. Increased roadway congestion and overcrowding on Pace service were the main problems observed. Others mentioned that the current hub-and-spoke system (with Waukegan being the hub) is no longer efficient since so much growth has occurred in the county, and jobs and services are not now only located in Waukegan. Poor service to the disabled community throughout the county was also mentioned.

Some stakeholders feel that some improvement has been made in service to the elderly and that general public transit has improved in the southeastern part of the county. There was also discussion about Lake County becoming more interested in improving transit service. Several stakeholders complimented the improved transit services provided by several townships.

**What are some solutions to current issues in your opinion?**

The overwhelming answer to this question was improvement and expansion of the public transit service. Specific suggestions were:

- More flexible fixed-route service in the suburbs.
- Consolidated fare system between Pace and Metra.
- Expanded weekend service.
- Evening service past 7:00 p.m.
- Coordinate paratransit services in Lake County to close geographical gaps and provide easy connections to mainline Pace routes and Metra rail stations.

- Development of intermodal transportation hubs.
- Have public transit service coordinate with volunteer associations so that the volunteer associations can fill in service gaps or perform services such as door-through-door service.

**Is same-day scheduling of rides critical?**

None of the stakeholders interviewed believed that same-day scheduling of rides was critical. However, they believed it is a good idea. Most stated that subscription service is more critical, especially for those who use paratransit to go to work or school and those who need dialysis treatment.

**What unmet needs do you see? (Time of day, gaps in areas served, accessing services.)**

The majority of stakeholders interviewed believed that an expanded service area, and evening and weekend service were the greatest unmet needs. Other unmet needs mentioned were:

- Obtaining federal and state funding for transit.
- Better service to county medical facilities such as Lake Forest Hospital, Vista Medical Center East, Condell facilities in Libertyville, and medical offices in Gurnee.

**What do you see as your role in aiding in providing transportation to clients (i.e., is your goal/mission to help find rides, help to pay)? What do you see in the future as a way you would like to change and/or become more involved in transportation? This could mean a variety of things such as involvement with the coordinating council or applying for grants.**

The overwhelming majority of social service agency stakeholders interviewed see their role as advocates for better public transportation for their clients. All are involved in various committees established to advocate improvement in public transportation in Lake County such as the Lake County Coordinated Transportation Services Committee, Getting to Work in Lake County, and the Pace ADA Committee.

**Would your agency be willing to donate time/staff in a more coordinated transportation effort to better serve clients?**

The stakeholders interviewed all expressed they currently (and will continue to) donate time and staff to improve coordination of transit services to their clients.

**How accessible are both PACE routes and paratransit services to your clients? Is the service user-friendly? What are some problems with accessing PACE services at this time? Ultimately, how effective is PACE at meeting your clients' needs?**

Of primary concern are the lack of sidewalks, curb cuts, and shelters on many Pace routes making it virtually impossible for disabled and elderly persons to access some Pace routes. There were also many comments on the difficulty in accessing Pace's reservation services and not being able to reserve a trip at the desired time due to the buses being full. Another accessibility issue is limited subscription service.

**Have you in the past been involved with, or contacted, PACE staff? Who else may perform this function?**

All stakeholders with clients that use Pace have been involved with Pace staff.

**Have your clients expressed any comments on transportation to you directly, positively or negatively?**

Many of the comments made by the stakeholders concerning operational issues (reservations, expanded service, evening and weekend service, subscription reservations) have come from comments made by their clients.

**What is the best fare payment method for your clients (cash, token/punch pass, direct-purchase vouchers, etc.)?**

Most of the social service agencies felt that a punch pass would be the simplest and easiest fare payment. Only one agency interviewed purchases travel vouchers from Pace.

**Have you discussed any transportation-related issues with any other agencies/organizations or know of others facing similar issues? If so, who and what clients do they represent?**

All have been very involved in discussing transportation issues and sharing ideas, principally with their involvement in the Lake County Coordinated Transportation Services Committee.

**Do you provide training on using services? Do you provide referrals to other agencies?**

Most agencies provide assistance and information services on how to use transit services and refer services to other agencies. The Center for Independent Living provides independent living skills training which includes using public transportation to persons with disabilities, except for the blind.

**What is the single most important aspect of transportation for your clients?**

The number one answer is accessibility.

**Would you be more willing to be involved in coordinating transportation for your clients?**

All are currently involved in coordinating transportation to their clients.

**How much time is spent on transportation issues/scheduling for your clients?**

Anywhere from 10 to 50 percent of the stakeholders' time is spent on transportation issues.

**If there was one thing you would improve, what would that be?**

- More transit service that is tailored to the needs of the suburban area.
- A centralized Call Center for paratransit.
- Expanded service area.
- Increased transit funding.
- Expanded weekend and evening service.

**How do you schedule trips?**

This question was asked of the agencies that operate paratransit service, and each answered that they manually schedule trips.

**What software is used, if any?**

Neither operator uses specifically-designed transit software.

**What opportunities do you see to coordinate with other agencies?**

Several agencies would like to coordinate information and referral services, and perhaps coordinate volunteer services.

**What barriers do you see to a coordinated paratransit service in Lake County?**

Some very astute comments were made concerning barriers to a coordinated paratransit service, such as:

- Low population density in many areas of the county.
- Some agencies may see change as a barrier and fear they may lose their operational independence.
- The availability of funding is also seen as a potential barrier.

**What coordination strategies would you be willing to pursue?**

Most felt that a good coordination strategy would be the development of a centralized Call Center.