



Study Outcomes

Three primary products were produced as part of this project. These include the Resource Guide, the Agency Education Program, and the Public Education Program. Each was prepared to serve as a separate document for use by local agency staff, other locations in New Hampshire, and other rural areas seeking to begin coordinated transportation programs.

TRANSPORTATION PROVIDER INVENTORY

Contacts were made with 39 providers as part of this study to update the inventory of existing transportation providers and to prepare the Resource Guide. Of the providers contacted, 28 providers were sent the inventory questionnaire. Of the 28 questionnaires sent, 12 responses were received, for a response rate of 43 percent. Information from 13 other providers was received by telephone, from the Carroll County Transit Feasibility Study (2007), or from the Regional Coordinated Transit Plan prepared for the North Country Council Planning Region (2006).

Results from the inventory are presented below and form the basis for the Resource Guide. The main provider of public transit services is North Country Transit—which provides general public transportation services in portions of Coos and Grafton Counties.



Other providers are identified; however, most are human service providers who provide services directly to their clients.

Most transportation providers provide a door-to-door, demand-response type of service. North Country Transit is the only provider that provides a deviated fixed-route service. There are a few providers—such as North Country Transit, White Mountain Transit Authority, and Wolfeboro Trolley Company—that provide regularly scheduled transit service open to the general public.

Hours of operation range from providing transit service a few hours a couple of days per week to operating service 10 or more hours per day, seven days a

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week. Some providers provide transportation on an as-needed basis. On average, operating hours and days of service are approximately 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., five days a week.

Service areas range from providing local transportation in towns to transportation within the counties of Coos, Grafton, Belknap, and Carroll. There are a few providers that provide transportation to the entire State of New Hampshire. Also, there are a few providers that provide transportation across the Vermont border. Most of the human service agencies provide transportation to serve their centers and meet their client needs.

A total of 201,000 annual one-way passenger-trips were provided. Annual ridership ranges from less than 400 annual passenger-trips to over 62,000 annual passenger-trips. The average of the 13 providers responding with ridership data was 19,000 one-way trips, while the median was 2,000 one-way trips. Many of the providers operate small transportation programs with low ridership.

The largest percentage of transportation providers are open to the general public (33 percent). This is closely followed by providers that are open to both seniors and persons with disabilities (20 percent). Another 10 percent of providers (three responses) provide transportation for seniors only and another 10 percent provide transportation for guests only. Some providers give priorities to elderly and disabled persons in their general public service.

Respondents average \$263,000 in annual operating costs. There were 11 responses to this question. Annual operating budgets ranged from \$1,500 to \$1,000,000. The median reported budget was \$86,000.

Providers were asked how transportation services were funded at their agency. As expected, most private for-profit transportation was funded through client fares and resident fees, while nonprofit agencies funded transportation through various sources such as Federal Transit Administration Sections 5310 and 5311, Job Access Reverse Commute, Medicaid, Donations, United Way, and contracts.

RESOURCE GUIDE

The Resource Guide is included in Appendix C. This Guide was prepared as a desk reference for use by members of the proposed Regional Coordinating Council (RCC). Basic information about each transportation program is presented including a description of the service provided, the service area, type of clients served, and basic operating information. Information is provided for 23 different transportation programs including public transit services, private transportation providers, and human service agencies.

The Resource Guide will be useful for members of the RCC who are not familiar with the transportation services that are currently provided in Carroll, Coos, and Grafton Counties. This will serve as a handy reference as the RCC looks at opportunities to coordinate these various transportation programs.

This guide contains a gateway of information on the various transportation providers—public, private, volunteers, and human service agencies—that provide access to transportation services in the North Country area which includes Carroll County, Coos County, and northern Grafton County. Not all of the providers reviewed are “transit agencies” in the traditional sense of the word. Rather, the various providers are entities that provide some type of passenger transportation service. The services provided by these agencies are presented in the pages that follow.

The main provider of transit services is North Country Transit—which provides general public transportation services in portions of Coos and Grafton Counties. Other providers are identified; however, most are human service providers who provide services directly to their clients. Many providers were contacted as part of the Carroll County Transit Plan and the Regional Coordinated Transit Plan for the North Country Council Planning Region.



AGENCY EDUCATION PROGRAM

The Agency Education Program provides the information for a local community to use the materials to develop and present their own education program. It is

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written as a guide to presenting a program similar to what was done in northern New Hampshire. The agency program contains several sections. Following the introduction, Section 2 describes the process to complete an inventory of existing transportation providers. If an inventory has been completed as part of a local Coordinated Public Transit Human Services Transportation Plan or other planning document, a new inventory should not be required and the existing transportation information may be used.

Section 3 describes the various coordination strategies to provide background on the actions which have led to the benefits described in the education program. This section provides the meeting organizer or facilitator with descriptions of the various coordination strategies which are discussed in the education program.

Section 4 discusses the recruitment process for participants in the education program. Recruiting participants may well be the most important part of the process. Getting the right people together is a key to progress toward coordination of services. Specific recommendations for identifying the appropriate individuals and techniques for recruiting are described.

Section 5 contains the actual education program. The education program was developed in two sessions. The first session is to present background information and the inventory of existing transportation resources. The second session presents the benefits of coordination with examples of transit agencies that have realized the various benefits. A narrative description is provided for each slide in the PowerPoint presentation. In addition, the education program incorporates use of the Framework for Action Community Self-Assessment. Meeting organizers are encouraged to use the United We Ride Ambassador for their region to assist in presenting the program and particularly to conduct the Community Self-Assessment. National examples of successful coordination efforts are included to encourage use of the program in any rural area of the country.

Additional supportive material is included in the Agency Education Program. The PowerPoint slides are provided along with the Community Self-Assessment and an example Invitation Letter.

PUBLIC EDUCATION PROGRAM

The Public Education Program provides the information for a local community to use the materials to develop and present their own education program. It is written as a guide to presenting a program similar to what was done in northern New Hampshire. The public program contains several sections. Following an introduction, Section 2 describes the various coordination strategies to provide background on the actions which have led to the benefits described in the education program. This section provides the meeting organizer or facilitator with descriptions of the various coordination strategies which are discussed in the education program.

Section 3 describes steps which may be taken to announce the education program meetings and attract participants. An example announcement is provided.

Section 4 contains the actual education program. The public education program is presented as a single session. A narrative description is provided for each slide in the PowerPoint presentation. The description of the coordination strategies and the benefits are presented from the perspective of the user. In addition, the education program incorporates use of the Community Self-Assessment which was developed specifically as part of this research project. The assessment is focused on issues of concern to users and provides insight to the perception of transportation services in a community. National examples of successful coordination efforts are included to encourage use of the program in any rural area of the country.

Additional material is included to support the public education program. These include a sample invitation letter, a sample meeting announcement, the Community Self-Assessment, and a sample brochure describing the benefits of coordinated transportation services.

INCREASED COORDINATION

In anticipation of increasing participation in coordination in TCCAP/NCT's service area, two regional luncheon meetings were held between the months of March and May of 2008. Two meetings were held for several reasons: 1) it became obvious

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that the distances between the regions was viewed as a barrier for participants to travel to attend meetings, 2) meetings scheduled on different days provided an option by having an alternate day for people to attend, and 3) the regions were at different stages of readiness to begin coordinating services.



Since the project began, some increased participation has begun with coordination currently happening between TCCAP/NCT and the American Cancer Society, Littleton Regional Hospital, Northern Human Services, and some volunteer groups. TCCAP/NCT also experienced efforts toward vehicle sharing this past winter when they were in need of spare vehicles to provide service. Granite State Independent Living (GSIL) met with the TCCAP/NCT Transportation Director and their insurance representative to see how vehicle sharing could take place. Although not all the obstacles were overcome, the two agencies are working together to resolve this issue.

REGIONAL COORDINATING COUNCIL

The development of the Regional Coordinating Council has progressed slowly. Support from the NHDOT and NHDHHS are strong, but difficulties around territorial issues have hindered the progress. Northern New Hampshire was identified as two potential regions for formation of the RCC. It remains to be decided with which region some towns should be affiliated. The groups from the two regions have met with the suggestion that the two regions merge into a single region. This would eliminate concerns that there would not be enough services for a broker to want to bid on serving Region 1 (which is very rural and sparsely populated). The State Coordinating Council as well as the NHDOT and NHDHH are in support of this decision. Although progress has been slower than desired, the use of the Agency Education Program was influential in the progress that has been made.

OTHER OUTCOMES

The meetings held to present the education programs have led to other regions within the state holding Transportation Summits with the United We Ride

Ambassador for the region. These summits are similar to the luncheon meetings held during this project to inform and educate people. The UWR Ambassador addressed the benefits of coordinated transportation services at each summit. These summits have been instrumental in recruiting participants to be on the RCCs. They have also been instrumental in educating residents, businesses, and agencies within those regions about the efforts being put forth by the State to implement a statewide coordinated transportation system.

The Regional Planning Commissions have increased the level of involvement with coordination of transportation services. Their involvement educates and advises on the connection between coordinated transportation services and land use planning.

The TCCAP/NCT's scheduling and dispatch system has been enhanced to support the demands of the coordinated transportation system. The service is being streamlined with calls coming in through an 800 number. Scheduler stations are being increased from two stations to four stations to handle the increased call volume. The scheduling and dispatch software was upgraded and put on the two new stations. The software enables the scheduler to input the passenger information and schedule it to the most productive and efficient provider. The software also has the capability to schedule the trips productively and efficiently and produce manifests that are faxed to the drivers. Changes to trip manifests can be made as called in, and schedulers dispatch those changes to drivers on a daily basis. All trip requests are asked to be called in 24 hours in advance to allow for the best possible coordination and efficiency in scheduling.

