

North Country Transit Public Transportation Participation Pilot Program

Executive Summary

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Executive Summary

North Country Transit—a service of Tri-County Community Action Program in Berlin, New Hampshire—contracted with LSC Transportation Consultants, Inc. to provide technical assistance and support as part of a project funded by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). The project was funded by the FTA as part of the Public Transportation Participation Pilot Program. This project is one of seven selected nationally for the first year of the program.



The focus of the project was to develop an educational program to teach human services agencies and the public about the benefits of coordinating transportation services. The overall outcome of the process will be public awareness and provider participation in efforts to develop a coordinated regional transportation system.

The region includes Coos, Carroll, and Grafton Counties. Within these counties there is a variety of human services transportation. There are limited private transportation operators serving portions of the region. Public transit is currently limited to small portions of each county.

STUDY PROCESS

The participation of LSC began in November 2007 with a kick-off meeting held in Berlin. The purpose of the meeting was to inform participants of the process and obtain input regarding some of the possible approaches. Input was obtained from participants regarding appropriate strategies for educational materials and resources which may be used.

Draft strategies were developed and presented to regional stakeholders who agreed to participate in the process. Input on the strategies was used to refine the approach and develop the draft program and materials.

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Two separate education programs were prepared and presented in draft form as part of this pilot project. Sessions were held at two locations in northern New Hampshire. Based on feedback from participants and the results of those sessions, the programs were revised and improved to the final programs. Final drafts were presented in a review session with key stakeholders and review comments were incorporated into the final documents. The documents are meant to serve as a guide for presenting the education programs in any community.

EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Public Education Program

The first program focused on public involvement and was targeted for a broad audience. The education program includes a presentation to be used in a public meeting. Recommendations are provided for recruiting participants including whom to invite and approaches for contacting participants. A guide for the meeting process and presentation are provided. One aspect of the program is the use of a community transportation assessment. A short questionnaire was prepared to use as part of the public meeting to stimulate discussion of the transportation services in the local community. The questionnaire was kept brief and focused on perceptions of the participants.



The benefits of coordinated transportation services are presented from the perspective of the user. Only those benefits which directly affect users are presented and participants should be shown how they could personally benefit from coordination efforts.

Agency Education Program

The second program is focused on transportation providers and human service agencies. This program has been developed to be conducted as two sessions. During the first session, participants are provided with background information about coordination of transportation services, the inventory of transportation

programs in their community, and the transportation needs which have been identified. This session is also used to recruit participants for the more extensive session on the benefits of coordination. The first session should be limited to one hour, while the second session will last three to four hours and may be scheduled to include lunch with a lunch break during the meeting.

The program recommends use of a neutral facilitator for the two sessions. Because of the issues surrounding coordination efforts, it may be important to have a person who is not perceived as pursuing a specific agenda. A neutral facilitator may be able to engage all participants and overcome resistance on the part of some participants.



During the second session, the United We Ride Community Self Assessment should be used to stimulate discussion. The recommendation is to use the United We Ride Ambassador for the region to conduct the Self Assessment and lead this part of the discussion. The Ambassador may also contribute to the presentation and discussion of specific benefits that have been experienced by other transportation programs. The meeting facilitator and Ambassador should identify examples of coordination programs to be used in the presentation. Although the program includes numerous examples, use of local examples and examples that are familiar to the presenter is encouraged.

The goal of the second session is to identify some preliminary action steps appropriate for the local community. This may be the formation of a task force or coalition to begin discussion of coordination opportunities.



Materials have been provided to support the two programs. These include a sample brochure formatted in Microsoft Publisher and PowerPoint presentation files. Each may be customized for the specific community. Sample invitation letters are included which may be used as part of the recruiting effort.