



CHAPTER IX

Implementation Plan

INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides the implementation strategies and steps for the Community Mobility Project (CMP). The chapter describes the priorities for coordination strategies, the marketing program, projected costs, and implementation steps.

COORDINATION STRATEGIES

The coordination strategies are described in Chapter VI and specific recommendations for coordinated services are described in more detail in Chapter VIII and summarized briefly here. The focus for implementing these strategies will be the formation of a Regional Coordinating Council (RCC). As described in the Implementation Steps, the RCC should be established immediately to begin the actions necessary for the coordinated transportation services.

The first priority for coordination of transportation services is a consolidated scheduling and dispatch center. The State of New Hampshire is moving to establish a Regional Transportation Coordinator (RTC) in each region which will function as the broker for non-emergency Medicaid transportation services. Ideally the RTC will function as the single call center for all transportation services in the region. The recommended approach is for this function to be provided by CATS which will operate a scheduling and dispatch center for the public transportation services. The State will require a competitive process for selection of the RTC for the Medicaid program. The RCC will be responsible for setting contract requirements within the State's guidelines, issuing a Request for Proposals, and selecting the RTC. This is described in more detail in the implementation section of this chapter.

The Charlestown pilot project is the second priority for implementing coordinated transportation services. The recommended service is Dial-a-Ride within Charlestown and a route-deviation connection to Claremont. The public transit service

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would be operated by CATS using either a vehicle provided by CATS or the vehicle currently in Charlestown for the Pathways program. Red Cross volunteers will be used to provide individual medical trips to medical facilities not served directly by the public transit service and for trips which cannot be met by the transit service schedule.

A new Dial-a-Ride service should be added in the Newport-Sunapee area. This will allow the Newport route to operate on a regular schedule and facilitate transfers every hour with the Claremont route. This new service will require additional funding to operate an additional vehicle in Newport.

Connections to Lebanon, Hanover, and the Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center are the next step in implementing service throughout the county. The proposed connection is to serve commuters and individuals accessing the medical facilities in Hanover.

A vanpool program should be included to meet the needs of commuters who will not be served by the public transit service. CATS should serve as the mobility manager and be responsible for the vanpool program.

MARKETING PROGRAM

The marketing program for CMP should focus on coordinated transportation services and the benefit to the community. CMP should also promote the public transportation service provided by CATS as part of the coordinated transportation system.

Promote Service to Users

This concept has been detailed throughout this report with several examples of promotion presented in previous chapters. Promotion of the coordinated transportation services should include the following:

- Establish an educational program that includes a simple one-page information sheet.
- Establish relationships with local business to educate employers and employees on the use of the system.

- Hold a training workshop for local social service agencies.
- Provide user incentives such as discount passes, free days, donation of canned food for charities, etc.
- Advertise in the local paper, highlighting employees' or patrons' stories.
- Allow local retailers/businesses to sell transit passes.
- Promote a special shopping tour for seniors/ elderly/disabled which includes numerous businesses and retailers.
- Provide local businesses with information brochures they can post at their place of business, including local restaurants.
- Work with local businesses to allow them to advertise on the buses, thereby generating revenue and creating business partnerships.
- Increase the use of the Internet for advertising and information dissemination.
- An outreach program to groups and agencies where these groups are visited regularly to keep them abreast of the transit system and/or changes.



One-Year Marketing Plan

A one-year marketing plan is a list of projects that should be completed throughout the following fiscal year. Table IX-1 presents the One-Year Marketing Plan for CMP. This plan gives monthly steps for completion by the marketing team for an entire year. This should be used as a guide for future planning. While it may not be possible or feasible to complete all the activities listed, this should be a framework for programmed initiatives and be used as a guide.

**Table IX-1
One-Year Marketing Plan**

Month One		Activities
S T E P S	1	Establish a Marketing Team.
	2	Develop new brochure on coordinated services.
	3	Visit local schools and set up a special student pass system on a trial basis.
	4	Identify possible outreach events.
	5	Establish marketing goals for CMP.
Month Two		Activities
S T E P S	1	Identify and begin planning for an upcoming community event.
	2	Investigate advertising costs on local radio station.
	3	Identify those businesses and agencies that are interested in advertising with CATS.
	4	Develop a promotional kit for coordinated transportation programs.
Month Three		Activities
S T E P S	1	Attend a local community event with handouts, free daily passes, etc.
	2	Advertise on a local radio station.
	3	Hold a "Shopping Day" offering a communitywide shopping trip for senior citizens free of charge or for a minimal flat fee.
	4	Hold a "Free Ride Day" offering a one-way free ride on a CATS bus.
Month Four		Activities
S T E P S	1	Publish article in local news about community benefits of coordinated services.
	2	Contact two employers or agencies regarding a bus pass program.
	3	Visit with local business/retailer to educate employees/employers on the transit system.
Month Five		Activities
S T E P S	1	Visit local agencies and senior centers to discuss joint ventures to include promotional days and possible joint sponsorship of area trips.
	2	Prepare human interest stories about benefits to individuals using coordinated transportation services.
	3	Hold a "Bus Riding Training Day" following a Seniors' Luncheon.
Month Six		Activities
S T E P S	1	Hold Marketing Team six-month meeting.
	2	Evaluate current marketing strategies to be sure CMP is "on-target" and accomplishing marketing goals.
	3	Contact two employers or agencies regarding a bus pass program.
	4	Establish the following year's marketing budget.
Month Seven		Activities
S T E P S	1	Advertise on a local radio station.
	2	Visit with local schools to plan additional events.
	3	Plan "Sterling Shoppers Week," a week of discounted fares for those doing holiday shopping.
Month Eight		Activities
S T E P S	1	Update the website with transit information.
	2	Contact two employers or agencies regarding a bus pass program.
Month Nine		Activities
S T E P S	1	Start "Thrifty Thursday" with fares lowered to 25 cents for that month's Thursdays.
	2	Produce a "Transit Rider's Guide" for users of coordinated services.
	3	Quarterly Marketing Team Meeting.
Month Ten		Activities
S T E P S	1	Distribute "Transit Rider Guide".
	2	Contact two employers or agencies regarding a bus pass program.
	3	Evaluate the success of senior and children's programs in the form of surveys and boarding counts to determine if these market segments have increased over past years' ridership levels.
Month Eleven		Activities
S T E P S	1	Hold a children's art contest where children can compete for small prizes for designing a transit-related picture or painting. Coordinate with schools to promote the program.
	2	Hang children's art in buses behind plexiglass for public viewing.
Month Twelve		Activities
S T E P S	1	Hold Marketing Team year-end meeting.
	2	Evaluate overall marketing successes and failures for future marketing plans.

Brochure

A brochure should be prepared describing the coordinated transportation services in Sullivan County. This brochure should be printed in color if possible, and should be translated into Spanish once it is finalized. The brochure should describe all of the services available and how to access those services through the consolidated reservations center.

Coordinated Transportation Website

Nearly 50 percent of US households have Internet access. Additionally, there are Internet resources at local libraries, the local schools, senior centers, and other public locations. This makes using this media form an attractive way to market and advertise a transportation system. Much of the information in this section is taken from *Transit Cooperative Research Program, Synthesis 43, Effective Use of Transit Websites*. In general this report finds that transit patrons are primarily interested in basic customer service information such as maps, schedules, fares, and general service information. CMP should take this into consideration when designing their future website. Based on LSC's past experience with rural systems and website development, it was found that complicated pages, which take an overwhelming amount of time to load and refresh, drive customers away. Rural areas typically have slower Internet connection speeds and therefore it is recommended that the future site be simple in design with only essential information provided. The more complicated a website is to navigate, the more difficult it is for a user to obtain information.

However, there are some essential design elements which should be incorporated to make this site effective:

- Description of the available services
- Fares
- Schedules
- Maps
- Accessibility information
- Paratransit information
- Purchasing passes

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- Public involvement information
- Contact information

Information for specific providers, such as the CATS routes and schedules, should be maintained on the provider's website with links from the CMP website to that information. Other features would be a place for patrons to e-mail comments to CMP and a visitor counter.

The main benefits of a website are making the schedule, maps, and passenger information readily available. Other benefits include attracting new customers, improving the agency's image in the community, increasing ridership among existing patrons, and providing information for public involvement.

Key to site navigability are:

- Put important information at the top of a page.
- Group related information.
- Give greatest visibility to the information most often requested, such as schedule, fare information, service area, and contact information.
- Don't make visitors search or dig for important information.
- Place navigation elements on the left side of the screen, which could be repeated on every page to keep track of where they are on the site.
- Keep pages consistent in design, such as logo placement and contact information.
- Have the website reviewed by outside sources for ease of use. This could be in the form of a brief users' workshop at a local civic group meeting or seniors luncheon.

PDF Files

While PDF files are great for some, others despise waiting for them to load, or don't even have a PDF viewer. Care should be taken when considering the use of PDF documents on the website. That is not to say they should not be used for specific items such as printable route maps or system information. However, alternate forms of the files should be done in something like HTML (text) format. That is to say, if a PDF file is to be used, there should be an alternate file format for those who are unable or unwilling to use the PDF formats.

Schedules and Maps

Many times transit agencies try to “squeeze” large schedules onto their web page. This method does not make reading schedules online easy or pleasant. Schedules should be made accessible in PDF and HTML formats. In either case, a printable format should be designed so people can print schedules at their leisure. It is imperative that if schedules change, they be updated immediately on the website.

Maps on an agency’s website are an excellent idea if done properly. Maps should be clearly labeled and easy to read. Maps should have the major streets labeled as well as stop locations. Many agencies use smart tags associated with stop locations. A patron can click on a stop and this is linked to information about that stop, including the schedule for that particular stop.

Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities

A final note on website design is taking into consideration persons with visual disabilities. A number of simple steps can make a website accessible to persons with disabilities. These include the following:

- Providing a text equivalent of all graphical elements. For example, use of “ALT” (alternate) tags for graphical elements. Text alternatives make web pages accessible to screen readers, which are software programs that convert text into synthesized speech for blind or visually-impaired persons.
- Designing web pages so that information conveyed with color is available without color.
- Not causing the screen to flicker with a frequency greater than 2 Hz and lower than 5 Hz, which can induce seizures.

Following the above guidelines for website design should make for an effective site to provide useful transit information to Sullivan County residents.

FINANCIAL PLAN

The five-year operations and capital expenses are provided in Table IX-2. First year costs are estimated to be \$231,000. This is in addition to the current expenses of existing services. Subsequent year costs are provided at an annual increase of five percent with phased implementation of new services.

**Table IX-2
Coordinated Transportation Services Financial Plan, 2009-2013 (assumed 5% inflation)**

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
EXPENSES					
Services					
Establish RCC	\$ 48,000				
Newport Dial-a-Ride		\$ 54,023	\$ 56,724	\$ 59,560	\$ 62,538
Charlestown Demand-Response Zone w/RTE Deviation Service to Claremont		\$ 65,100	\$ 68,355	\$ 71,773	\$ 75,361
Call Center	\$ 70,000	\$ 73,500	\$ 77,175	\$ 81,034	\$ 85,085
Support for Volunteer Programs	\$ 25,000	\$ 26,250	\$ 27,563	\$ 28,941	\$ 30,388
Hanover Connection				\$ 75,246	\$ 79,008
Vanpool Program				\$ 40,000	\$ 42,000
Marketing Program	\$ 29,000	\$ 26,000	\$ 27,300	\$ 28,665	\$ 30,098
Subtotal	\$ 124,000	\$ 244,873	\$ 257,116	\$ 385,218	\$ 404,478
CAPITAL					
Vehicles	\$ 65,000		\$ 85,000		
Bike Racks	\$ 1,600	\$ 1,600	\$ 3,200		
Dispatch Software/Hardware	\$ 40,000	\$ 1,000	\$ 1,050	\$ 1,103	\$ 1,158
Subtotal	\$ 106,600	\$ 2,600	\$ 89,250	\$ 1,103	\$ 1,158
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$ 230,600	\$ 247,473	\$ 346,366	\$ 386,320	\$ 405,636

Source: LSC, 2008.

IMPLEMENTATION STEPS

The following are the initial steps to implement the recommended coordinated transportation services.

Establish Regional Coordinating Council

Formation of the RCC is the first step toward implementation of the recommendations for coordinated transportation services in Sullivan County. The core membership of the CMP should be used to establish the RCC. Guidelines for establishing the RCC are contained in the report *Statewide Coordination of Community Transportation Services*. Sample Bylaws and a Memorandum of Understanding are provided in the document.

Responsibility

The CMP should be responsible for drafting the Memorandum of Understanding and forming the RCC. Grant funding may be used to develop the Bylaws.

Timing

Formation of the RCC should begin immediately.

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1. Create a committee of the CMP with responsibility for drafting the Memorandum of Understanding and Bylaws.
2. Submit the Memorandum of Understanding and Bylaws to the State Coordinating Council (SCC) for approval.
3. Formally establish the RCC.
4. Transfer responsibilities from the CMP to the RCC.

Select Regional Transportation Coordinator

Once the RCC is established, the RCC should begin the process of selecting the Regional Transportation Coordinator (RTC). The schedule for selecting the RTC will depend on actions by the SCC.

Responsibility

The RCC will be responsible for selecting and contracting with the RTC.

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Timing

Initial steps should be taken as soon as the RCC is formed. The RCC will need to work closely with the SCC to ensure that no actions are taken prior to SCC actions to define the final process.

Implementation Steps

Implementation steps are described in Appendix L of *Statewide Coordination of Community Transportation Services*. The following is an outline of the steps to be followed. More detail for each step is currently being developed by the SCC.

1. Develop quality of service standards.
2. Develop RTC selection criteria to meet local requirements.
3. Draft Request for Proposals.
4. Obtain State approval of Request for Proposals.
5. Issue Request for Proposals and select RTC.
6. Finalize agreements with RTC.

Establish Consolidated Scheduling and Dispatch Center

Once selected, the RTC will be responsible for setting up the consolidated call center. Depending on the entity selected for the RTC, this may include dispatching for public transit services or may require a close working relationship with the CATS scheduling/dispatching program. The specific responsibilities of the RTC for reservations, scheduling, and dispatching will be defined in the Scope of Work for the RTC.

Responsibility

The RTC will be responsible for establishing the call center in accordance with the contract Scope of Work developed by the RCC.

Timing

The RTC should begin setting up the call center as soon as a contract is finalized.

Implementation Steps

The specific implementation steps will depend on the Scope of Work developed by the RTC.

Implement Charlestown Pilot Program

The proposed Charlestown service should be implemented as a pilot program for coordinated transportation services. Coordination of transportation programs should occur among the Red Cross, Pathways, CATS, and Connecticut River Transit. The CMP should maintain a continuing role as advocates for coordinated transportation services while the RCC takes on responsibility for implementation of the coordinated transportation program.

The CMP will have an important role in facilitating the relationships for the pilot project in Charlestown. While Pathways provides transportation to clients in Charlestown, the agency has not been active in the CMP or coordination efforts. The CMP will need to work to develop the relationships among the agencies to implement the Charlestown service as proposed. An option for the service would be to start without participation by Pathways. This approach will require new funding for the Dial-a-Ride and connector to Claremont. Financial support for volunteer transportation through the Red Cross should also be provided.

Responsibility

The CMP will be responsible for developing and facilitating the coordination relationships and obtaining new funding. The RCC will be responsible for agreements to establish and operate the proposed services.

Timing

The CMP has begun the process to develop the pilot project in Charlestown. These efforts should continue with involvement by the RCC when it is established.

Implementation Steps

1. Determine participating agencies.
2. Finalize service plan and draft agreements.

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3. Obtain funding.
4. Acquire vehicles if necessary.
5. Market and promote the service.
6. Implement the new service.