

GO Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan

2017

FARTHER

E X E C U T I V E S U M M A R Y



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PLAN OVERVIEW

This Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan (CHSTP) for the NJTPA region offers comprehensive recommendations for meeting the transportation needs of four target populations: persons age 65+, low-income persons, persons with disabilities, and veterans. It presents 33 strategies across nine areas of concern designed to address the existing and emerging needs of the approximately 1 million transportation disadvantaged residents within the 13-county NJTPA region, which spans 4,200 square miles and includes a total population of over 6.7 million people. The CHSTP updates the previous plan, adopted in 2008, and was developed through a local planning process that included the transportation providers (public, private and non-profit), human services providers, and members of the public.

Human Service Transportation planning, done well, can have a profound effect on the lives of the passengers it serves. The right systems, services and policies can facilitate access to employment, education, social supports and personal independence. Lack of coordination, poor communication, and non-integrated service areas can leave passengers frustrated, physically stranded, and socially and economically isolated. Safe mobility underpins independence, self-determination and dignity.

To provide such safe mobility and best meet the needs of the region and its residents, ample opportunity was afforded to the public and regional organizations to participate in shaping this update of the CHSTP. The region's Transportation Management Associations (TMAs), working in coordination with NJTPA, engaged with stakeholders through focus groups, surveys, and community planning sessions; in total, nearly 5,000 people representing the four target populations provided input through the public outreach effort. An Advisory Committee of informed stakeholders was also formed to offer input and give feedback at each phase of the plan development process.

The CHSTP includes an examination of existing plans, reports, laws and regulations to inventory how and where services are provided to the transportation disadvantaged populations. In addition, data from various sources were analyzed to profile the travel patterns of the disadvantaged populations. The CHSTP culminates with the development of strategies for addressing the identified needs. These strategies focus on improving access to destinations relevant to the target populations such as human service agencies, medical centers, local service providers, employment centers and One-Stop Career Centers; leveraging newly emerging technologies to enhance the mobility of targeted populations; and incorporating innovative best practices developed nationally and within New Jersey.

Strategies designed to enhance mobility, reduce service gaps, and respond to unmet needs are presented in terms of the needs they can address, the persons they can benefit, the geographic coverage they can provide, the variety of population groups they can affect, the resources involved, the ease of implementation, the public support they receive, and the availability of funding.

Service gaps and unmet needs in transportation services are grouped by types:

- **Spatial.** Gaps in the transportation network exist when locations and/or destinations are not served.
- **Temporal.** Gaps occur when service is not available at the times or frequency needed by consumers.
- **Institutional.** Gaps exist when the rules, regulations, and/or requirements that govern transportation service provision create barriers that limit mobility.
- **Infrastructure.** Gaps exist when conditions in the physical network or in technological infrastructure prevent or limit individuals from accessing available transportation options.
- **Awareness.** Gaps occur when providers and consumers lack information.

Strategies and Recommended Activities

The CHSTP articulates nine strategic themes that address the transportation needs of CHSTP target populations. The strategic themes emerged from public engagement activities, input from the Advisory Committee and experienced transit users, and review of county human services transportation plans as well as innovative practices.



The nine themes are presented below.

- **Increasing Auto Connections with Assistance** – Involves the use of automobiles with extra help from drivers to connect older adults with their desired destinations.
- **Reducing Financial Barriers** - Increasing access to a variety of modes of transportation that are typically unavailable to low-income populations due to financial constraints.
- **Coordinating Regional Destinations** - Maximizing resources and increasing efficiency by identifying common destinations of the target populations.
- **Improving Customer Experience** - Providing training to operators and services to customers that promote human dignity and customer satisfaction.
- **Enhancing Communication** - Strengthening communication between transportation providers and passengers; providing information, assistance, and training to increase awareness of available services.
- **Infrastructure Improvements** – Increasing vehicle accessibility and removing barriers in the physical landscape that impede access to transit options.
- **Enhancing and Expanding Service** – Expanding effective models and creating new connections to targeted locations using customer input.
- **Promoting Mobility on Demand** – Capitalizing on transportation network companies and their potential ability to offer accessible and flexible on demand service that can work in tandem with fixed route transit.
- **Incentivizing Operational Coordination** - Reducing redundancies in service and optimizing existing resources through interagency coordination.

Implementation

This report concludes with a list of 33 recommended activities designed to advance each of the nine strategic themes. The activities are categorized into short and mid-range (5+ years) timeframes and identify potential implementation partners and funding/resources. Some recommended activities build on existing programs, projects, and resources in the NJTPA region and are readily implementable. Examples of innovative strategies and actions being proposed in this plan include the following:

Concierge ride hailing scheduling without a smart phone – Older adults and persons with disabilities request rides through a concierge with a Transportation Network Company, such as UBER or Lyft. This bridges the technology gap experienced by many older adults and provides flexible service, as it does not require advance reservations. This service currently exists in the region, and could be expanded in the near term with support from foundations, human service non-profits, medical centers and others.

Universal payment/pre-paid fare card - This program effectively eliminates the need for understanding a variety of fare systems by streamlining the fare payment process and transfers across a region. One example is the LA Metro TAP Card, accepted by 25 different transit agencies in the Greater Los Angeles region. A similar program could integrate NJ TRANSIT bus, rail and light rail, PATH, and NYC MTA fares, and include all passengers -- within the general public and CHSTP target populations. Implementation would take a number of years, but could start with fare integration within NJ TRANSIT.

“Simply Get There” One-Click Site - This program provides a single website for information and trip planning for all riders. In Atlanta, Simplygetthere.org is a one-click site for customers to plan their trips through driving, biking, specialized services, vehicles for hire, and public transit. First piloted in 2015, the program provides a centralized online resource for all modes of transportation in the

Atlanta metro area, with a specific emphasis on options for individuals with disabilities, chronic medical conditions, lower income individuals, older adults, and veterans. Information from multiple providers and sources within the NJTPA region could be woven together to create a similar tool in a relatively short timeframe.

Safe Streets for Seniors and “City Bench” – These programs seek to provide a safe environment for seniors to walk in their communities and better access transit. In New York City, pedestrian projects to improve safety include intersection enhancements, additional traffic signals, curb extensions and new pedestrian islands. “City Bench” increases the amount of public seating with input from the general public -- flagging locations within a quarter mile from a hospital, community health center, or municipal facility. These types of programs could complement existing Complete Streets efforts across the region and could be pursued in the short-term.

Late night job access - Helping workers access jobs during the “third shift” - this program creatively addresses the needs of workers with nontraditional schedules and helps close first-mile, last-mile service gaps. An example in the NJTPA region is the Essex Night Owl, which moves commuters between their homes and Newark Penn Station from 1 AM to 5 AM , one of the largest transit hubs in the region. The program is operated by Meadowlink TMA with accessible vehicles and provides 450 rides per night. Priority is given to welfare or former welfare clients, or other low income, transit dependent individuals.

There are numerous other strategies and actions in the plan, which are prioritized to develop specific projects for future implementation, based on project feasibility and potential funding sources when available. Detailed profiles of innovative strategies are presented as examples within each strategic theme and highlight promising practices both within New Jersey and nationally.

➤ Download the plan at njtpa.org/human-services-plan

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