

Family of Transportation Services

Access to transportation mobility for older adults, people with disabilities, and individuals with lower incomes is critical for their physical, social, economic, and psychological well-being. Today, many federal programs emphasize coordinated transportation services that assist individuals in remaining active in their own communities rather than relying on segregated systems of the past. Transportation also helps individuals live, learn, work, and more actively participate in other communities' activities as well.



No one transportation solution fits all community transportation needs. Thus, United We Ride (UWR), a federal interagency initiative that coordinates human services transportation, underscores the importance of a wide range of travel options, services, and modes of travel. This range of options can be thought of as a "Family of Transportation Services."

Communities that adopt a *Family of Transportation Services* approach provide a broad range of options and specifically match modes to community demographics and needs, particularly the needs of older adults, people with disabilities, and individuals with lower incomes. A *Family of Transportation Services* may include:

- **Fixed-route transit:** Public transportation service provided in vehicles operated along predetermined routes according to a fixed schedule. Service routes are close to housing, health facilities, shopping, and other common destinations. Fixed-route transit includes services on accessible low-floor mid- or minibuses.
- **Rail transit:** A wide range of rail services including commuter rail, heavy rail, and light rail. Commuter rail provides transportation to urban passengers for short-distance travel between a central city and an

adjacent suburb. Heavy rail transports a heavy-volume of passengers on an electric railway that is characterized by exclusive rights-of-way, multicar trains, sophisticated signaling, and high-platform loading. Heavy rail is also referred to as a subway, elevated railway, or metropolitan railway (metro). Light rail provides transportation on a streetcar-type vehicle operated on city streets, semiexclusive rights-of-way, or exclusive rights-of-way. Service may be provided by step-entry vehicles or by level boarding.



- **Feeder service:** Paratransit service to and from an accessible fixed-route service to those individuals designated as eligible for ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) paratransit.
- **Flex-route options:** A blend of fixed-route and paratransit services that includes public bus routes with published schedules overlaid on an existing subscription and other prearranged service. Flex-route options also may include assigned routes based on where people live rather than routes predetermined by an organization or agency that funds the trips. Flex-route options continue to serve the general public, in accordance with a published bus schedule, as they pick up or drop off funded clients at their doorstep.
- **Demand-responsive:** Non-fixed route system of transporting individuals that requires advanced scheduling. An advance request for service is a key characteristic of demand-responsive service provided by public entities, nonprofits, and private providers.
- **ADA complementary paratransit:** Transportation services for individuals who have a disability that prevents them from independently using regular fixed-route transit services.
- **Specialized human-service, agency-provided paratransit (curb-to-curb, door-to-door or door-through-door/hand-to-hand):** Curb-to-curb service refers to the pick up and discharge of passengers at



the curb or driveway in front of their home or destination; door-to-door service refers to assistance provided to passengers between the vehicle and the door of their home or destination; door-through-door/hand-to-hand service refers to assistance provided to passengers through the door of their destination to another assistant or caregiver.

- **Special shuttle service:** Transportation services provided by faith, community, business, and other organizations to specific destinations.
- **Volunteer driver programs:** Services that use unpaid assistants or drivers to provide transportation.
- **Transit pass/voucher programs:** Transit subsidies that enable a target population to reach jobs, childcare facilities, training opportunities, and other activities. The subsidies may be in the form of bus passes, tokens, fare cards, coupon booklets, and debit cards.
- **Gas-voucher programs:** Certificates or credit for fuel used for transportation options operated by individuals, their families, or caregivers.
- **Travel training:** Assistance in using available transportation options.
- **Car and vanpool programs:** Ridesharing targeted at getting individuals to jobs, training, and special activities.



■ **Vehicle-sharing programs:** A service that provides specific access to cars for certain trip making without requiring the purchase of an automobile.

■ **Accessible taxi:** Vehicle licensed to provide on-demand taxi service for people with disabilities and older adults. An accessible taxi accommodates a passenger in his/her wheelchair while in the vehicle and meets requirements for lifts, ramps, and securement systems as specified in the Federal Code of Regulations.

■ **Education, information, and outreach:** Travel information for people with sensory, cognitive, linguistic, or other disabilities.

■ **Private-vehicle loan/purchase/donation programs:** Financial assistance for purchasing a vehicle or equipment for outfitting/adjusting a vehicle for use by persons requiring assistance or for supporting vehicle-sharing activities.



■ **Pedestrian/bike interface:** Infrastructure such as sidewalks, stops, traffic signals, and other provisions that encourage pedestrian and bike crossings that connect to other transportation services.

■ **Simplified access:** One-call centers assist customers in making all their travel arrangements.

Communities that support all modes of travel in the full range of the *Family of Transportation Services* offer the greatest level of mobility to all its residents, including older adults, people with disabilities, and individuals with lower incomes. Communities that manage all transportation options on a comprehensive and coordinated basis offer cost-effective transportation to all.

Getting Started and Measuring Progress

Matching community needs to services is difficult and requires knowledge of the *Family of Transportation Services* that currently exists in a community. Planning for and implementing additional components of the *Family of Transportation Services* involve the inclusion of a wide range of providers, customers, and agencies that plan for and fund transportation services. (The Transportation Services Coordination Plan fact sheet, which provides more information on the planning process, is available at www.unitedwerride.gov.)

Several organizational and management strategies can be used to establish a *Family of Transportation Services* for communities and arrange for mobility



managers to oversee service development and coordination. (See the Mobility Management fact sheet at www.unitedweride.gov for more information on managing and delivering coordinating transportation services). Strategies include:

- A network (“hubs and spokes”) that connects individual services to accommodate dispersed travel patterns.
- Comprehensive, coordinated management of services or delivery tools without formal associations.
- Defined partnerships for some or all services and delivery management tools.
- Service brokerages.
- Formal collaborative structures (including memorandums of understanding and agreements of affiliation).

- Information centers that inform customers of available transportation services.



Progress in implementing the *Family of Transportation*

Services approach can be measured by indicators such as:

- The percentage of transportation options available and appropriate for the demographics and needs of a community from among the services listed.
- The creation of a simplified access information system.
 - The development of mobility management service coordination strategies.
 - The development of brokerage systems that connect providers, customers, and funding agencies.

- The effectiveness of addressing customer needs through travel navigators within established programs and organizations.

- The inclusion of information on other types of transportation services offered by a community in driver training programs.





- The availability of transportation services information and training to students with disabilities who are planning their transition from school to the workplace.

Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) Technologies

Several ITS technologies support the *Family of Transportation Services* approach and enable one-stop, customer-based travel reservation, information, and trip planning services. They also support transportation service providers in meeting the mobility and safety needs of riders during major transportation incidents and community emergencies. Some examples of ITS technologies include:

Automatic vehicle location (AVL): A computer-based vehicle tracking system that uses global positioning satellites to locate a vehicle and transmit its location to a dispatch center via radio frequency or cellular-based communications technologies. AVL enables more efficient use of vehicles, greater coordination, and improved information for planning trips. This technology is practical for fixed-route, demand-responsive, rural transit, human-service, and rail transit modes.

Computer-aided dispatch (CAD): Computer software incorporates route information and schedules, trip orders, and vehicle assignments to allow dispatchers to locate vehicles and more efficiently dispatch trip requests, better maintain service, and more effectively respond to disruptions, such as a disabled vehicle. CAD, which is often integrated with AVL and GIS, is practical for fixed-route, demand-responsive, rural-transit, and human-service applications.



Geographic information systems (GIS): A computer-mapping technology that displays and analyzes transit data, such as routes, trip pick-up and drop-off times. GIS allows transit agencies to gather, manage, report, and store information relating to customers, schedules, and billing. GIS is practical for fixed-route, demand-responsive, rural-transit, and human-service applications.

Traveler information systems (TIS): A wide range of computer and communication technologies that enable customers to obtain real-time transit information and

trip-planning assistance. TIS are practical for fixed-route, demand-responsive, rural-transit, human-service, and rail-transit applications.

Electronic payment and collection systems: Technologies that enable customers to use a variety of mediums to pay for trips and simplify fare collection for transit providers. These are practical for fixed-route and demand-responsive applications.

When should a community pursue a *Family of Transportation Services* approach?

A *Family of Transportation Services* approach is well suited to a variety of community needs. It improves both the quantity and quality of existing services, helps to stretch existing resources, and identifies additional transportation needs. Consider a *Family of Transportation Services* if your community:

- Has a separate, uncoordinated network for individual transportation services.
- Does not have enough services and providers, or existing services are overbooked.
- Has gaps in services to meet the needs of older adults, people with disabilities, and individuals with lower incomes.
- Has inconsistent access to fixed-route or specialized transit providers across the community.
- Has transportation needs that outpace population growth.
- Has multiple providers that serve the same customer groups and geographic areas.
- Has customers who are confused about services, and service is inadequate.
- Does not have regular communication among providers, referral agencies and funding agencies.
- Has varying eligibility requirements for services depending upon the local transportation provider and its funding source.
- Has jurisdictional issues that prevent easy travel.

Resources

For more information about UWR initiatives, please contact the National Resource Center for Human Service Transportation Coordination at 1-800-527-8279 or visit the Web site at www.unitedweride.gov.

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