

**WEST VIRGINIA  
COORDINATION STUDY**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**PREPARED FOR:**

**WEST VIRGINIA TRANSPORTATION  
COORDINATING COUNCIL**



**NOVEMBER 18, 2005**



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### INTRODUCTION

Work under this project was undertaken on behalf of the West Virginia Transportation Coordinating Council (WVTCC), a state level committee appointed by the Governor to study issues pertaining to the effective and efficient use of transportation resources in the state. The West Virginia Department of Transportation, Division of Public Transit, acted as the contract administrator. A listing of Council members is found in Appendix A.

This Executive Summary is an overview of a two-phase transportation coordination study that began in February 2005. Details and documentation of the study are contained in the full report.

West Virginia's coordination efforts are its response to the efforts currently underway at the Federal level. The U.S. Department of Transportation, with its partners at the U.S. Departments of Health and Human Services, Labor, and Education, recently launched a new program designed to enhance coordination. The *United We Ride* campaign is a five-part initiative to improve the coordination of human services transportation, to break down the barriers between programs, and set the stage for local partnerships that generate common sense solutions.

*United We Ride* (UWR) is an outgrowth of the Federal Interagency Coordinating Council on Access and Mobility (CCAM), established by President George W. Bush under the Executive Order on Human Service Transportation Coordination. The CCAM includes eleven Federal Departments working together to simplify access; reduce duplication; and enhance cost efficiencies within existing resources.

The Congress and the Executive Branch are interested in ensuring that various human service transportation activities funded by various Federal programs are better coordinated. In one recent study, it was estimated that no less than sixty-two (62) different Federal programs administered by eight (8) different Federal agencies provide funding that may be used to support passenger/client transportation.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Transportation Disadvantaged Populations*, prepared by the General Accountability Office (GAO) GAO-03-697, June 2003.

### Introduction

**Introduction**

In 2005, the CCAM submitted a report to the President outlining five overarching recommendations.<sup>2</sup> As such, most of the recommendations represent interim, coordination-based solutions that the CCAM believes will strengthen existing transportation services to be more cost-effective and accountable and help providers become more responsive to consumers. The five recommendations include:

- (1) *Coordinated Transportation Planning.*
- (2) *Vehicle Sharing.*
- (3) *Cost Allocation.*
- (4) *Reporting and Evaluation.*
- (5) *Consolidated Access Transportation Demonstration Program.*

These five (5) subject areas are important, as the Federal Transit Administration administers a grant program that seeks competitive proposals under the *United We Ride* program that can fund projects that implement these and other coordination activities.

West Virginia's coordination study was performed in stages. The first phase of work involved collecting information relating to current transportation resources available in West Virginia, assessing the inventory information, compiling the work into a working document, and comparing the information to various structural models of coordination being used in other states.

The second phase involved the development of an action plan for implementation of coordinated transportation service delivery throughout the state and establishment of a method to monitor and improve the quality of those services.

**STUDY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The final report produced as a result of this project documented the findings of the study as collected in the survey and focus group portions of this study under the WVTCC's efforts to promote coordination in West Virginia. The study was designed as a first step; it is not intended as a blueprint or mandate, but rather a framework on which to build over the ensuing years.

**Coordination Framework**

Coordination is not a single strategy, but a range of options from relatively simplistic actions to complex implementation strategies. This "coordination continuum" ranges from information sharing to the

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<sup>2</sup> *Report to the President: Human Service Transportation Coordination Executive Order 13330*, prepared by the of the Federal Interagency Coordinating Council on Access and Mobility (CCAM), 2005.

**Study Findings and  
Recommendations**

consolidation of services under the auspices of a single provider. The continuum begins with simple networking and progresses to consolidation.

- **Networking** – the simplest form of partnerships where participants share a common interest but with no significant action other than information exchange.
- **Cooperation** – involves low-level linkages, informal agreements, and some possible resource sharing.
- **Coordination** – more intense linkages that include resource sharing to pursue common goals.
- **Collaboration** – the most sophisticated partnership form with strong, formal linkages among partners and complex goals implemented over longer periods of time.
- **Consolidation** – one organization assumes responsibility for service delivery of other participant organizations.

In reviewing the survey data from West Virginia transportation providers as well as input from the WVTCC, it was clear that existing collaborations or coordination at the state level are relatively rare, and that collaboration or consolidation at the local level for more than one-half of the state's transit providers is non-existent.

In building a framework for coordination in West Virginia, strategies must incorporate stronger institutional cooperation among state agencies prior to setting in motion any program of incentives to promote coordination at the local level.

### **Recommended Strategy**

A multi-faceted strategy should be considered by the State of West Virginia. Key points in this framework include the following recommended action steps:

- ◆ **Formalize, by Legislation, the Governor's Transportation Coordination Council, and designate the Council as the Entity to Oversee and Implement Transportation Coordination**

Focus group participants were adamant that, for transportation coordination to become a reality in West Virginia, an entity must be designated with the requisite responsibility and authority to carry it out. The existing Council seemed to be the logical choice. Participants also believed that, for the Council to be effective, the following actions must also be taken:

**Study Findings and  
Recommendations**

- The Council must be formalized by State Legislation;
- The Public Transit Advisory Council required by legislation but currently inactive should be dissolved;
- Council membership should be expanded to add a representative of the West Virginia Division of Rehabilitation Services and a private for profit transportation provider representative. (Note: expansion of the Council should not exceed twenty members to ensure that the size does not become detrimental to the Council's mission).

**◆ Education of Public and Human Service Transportation Service Providers**

It was evident from the survey results that many transportation providers are unaware or are unsure of the benefits of coordination. West Virginia should undertake a cooperative effort among all key state agencies that would disseminate information on the benefits of coordination.

**◆ Technical Assistance/Peer-to-Peer Assistance**

Simple distribution of brochures, etc. will not be sufficient to raise the level of understanding among human service agency transportation provider on the benefits of coordination. A concerted effort should be undertaken to ensure that where local interest increases in development of more coordinated transportation system, a program of technical assistance is in place so that technical experts are available to assist local officials.

**◆ Develop Statewide Strategic Approach to Better Utilize Federal Funds**

Many states have developed statewide strategies to maximize utilization of Federal funds that flow to the state prior to spending state or local funds. West Virginia has no strategy in place. The Coordinating Council should work on developing a statewide policy wherein various state departments, such as the Bureau of Senior Services and the Division of Public Transit, develop a more strategic approach to funding local services. Both agencies often provide funding to the same provider with little coordination or clearinghouse functions occurring at the state level.

Many states for example look to the state transit agency (i.e. typically the State DOT) as the source of capital funding for vehicles used in specialized and human service transportation. In these scenarios, state human service agencies do not fund capital, but prefer to invest limited

funds in direct service provision (purchase of service, direct service operation, etc.)

Moreover, projections of available transit funding in the state under SAFETEA-LU will come with statutory provisions that will permit the recipient of Federal transit funds to meet their local matching requirements with funds earned from purchase of service agreements with human service agencies, even if the source of those funds is another Federal program. This is a powerful local funding tool where generation of local match from local governments is an issue. The state should work in cooperation with county and city associations to ensure that maximum leverage of Federal funding is utilized.

#### ◆ **Develop Coordination Demonstration Programs**

West Virginia should encourage and reward local initiative by awarding special coordination demonstration grants that provide funding for a multi-year period to allow for the start-up, implementation, and monitoring of a local coordination project. To initiate this program, we suggest that one or two regions be identified as potential sites and that a Mobility Manager be hired to facilitate transportation coordination in the region(s). Funding for this program could come from Federal and State sources (United We Ride grants, for example), which could be identified as a result of partnerships between and among key state agencies. These demonstrations could go far in seeking the more efficient delivery of Federally supported transportation services and should be a priority of the Council. As the demonstrations progress, they could be used to address such issues as streamlining funding sources, billing and reimbursement procedures used by different human service agencies and exploring how technology can be used to facilitate the coordination of transportation services.

Because many of the coordination activities identified in West Virginia to date are primarily informal information and referral efforts, some education and/or technical assistance may be necessary to assist local communities with the planning for, and development of, a local coordination project. One means which has proven useful in other states in developing and encouraging transportation coordination is the development of a coordination “tool kit.” The tool kit would consist of a series of short discussions on different aspects of coordination, e.g., planning, implementation, overcoming specific obstacles, such as insurance and liability issues, developing joint efforts on grants-writing, training, etc. The tool kit might also contain examples of forms and other documents that are ready to customize and use by local groups.

◆ **Promote and Financially Participate in Local Coordination Studies**

A model planning process for counties and regions to undertake local coordination studies should be developed and, if possible, funds provided to cover 100 percent of the cost, or participation at an amount that would require only a nominal match level.

◆ **Procedures Should be Adopted to Ensure Better Coordination of Funding Decisions by State Agencies on Local Grants**

In order to facilitate transportation coordination at the local level, State agencies should better coordinate funding decisions at the state level to prevent or institutionalize duplicative and under-utilized services. The Council would be the logical choice to initiate this activity.

◆ **State Agencies Should Form a Working Group to Establish Uniform Approaches to Local Project Reporting on Transportation Service Delivery**

Program reporting burdens have been identified as obstacles to transportation coordination both in the surveys and focus groups. A state agency working group could be an effective mechanism in addressing, if not eliminating altogether, this obstacle to coordination.

◆ **The West Virginia Transportation Coordinating Council should support the WV DOT Division of Public Transit's efforts in the Development of the required FTA Coordination Plans, and Strongly Encourage, to the extent feasible, the Participation of Key Local Agencies in the Planning Process**

Local coordination plans are now required (beginning with FY 2007) as part of the FTA's Section 5310, Job Access and Reverse Commute, and New Freedom programs. In order for these plans to be meaningful, cooperation of key local agencies, beyond the affected transportation providers, in the development of these plans is imperative. The WVDOT Division of Public Transit, as the administrator of the program on behalf of FTA, will be the lead in overseeing the development of the plans, however, the Council's support and encouragement can go a long way to promote local participation.

## STUDY BACKGROUND

As stated previously, this study was West Virginia's response to the transportation coordination activities taking place at the Federal level. The study took place over a period of eight months (February through October, 2005) and included several meetings with the WVTCC, an in-depth survey process, and three stakeholder focus groups conducted across the state. The steps that led to the findings and recommendations in the preceding section are presented below.

## STAKEHOLDER INPUT

### Surveys

In order to determine the level of, and commitment to, existing coordination activities throughout West Virginia, a survey of transportation providers was conducted. Transportation providers included, but were not limited to public and specialized transit providers (e.g., public transit systems, for-profit operators, nonprofit operators, FTA Section 5310 operators, etc.); human service agency provider organizations (e.g., agencies on aging, preschools, county departments of human services, Head Start programs, hospitals/nursing homes, workforce centers, etc.); and other private, for-profit organizations that provide transportation services (e.g., taxicabs).

A total of 340 surveys were distributed. In order to meet project deadlines, a cutoff was established for receiving completed surveys. A total of 154 surveys were returned and deemed usable, resulting in a very respectable response rate of 45.3 percent. (Note: Additional surveys were received after the cutoff. Although data from those surveys were entered into the database for historical purposes, the written analysis for the final report was not revised since a review of the additional information revealed no significant change to the conclusions and findings previously drawn. Therefore, the graphs and charts presented in the final report reflect the original 154 surveys.)

### Survey Results

The type of agencies responding varied widely, with most falling into the social service agency--nonprofit category, followed by senior centers, and public transit agencies. Other respondents included, nursing homes, taxi operators and other private transportation providers, head start agencies, adult day care centers, and others. As expected, transportation was the top cited business purpose.

The primary purpose of the survey was to gain information regarding not only the status of coordination efforts in West Virginia, but factors which already affect, or might affect in the future, those efforts.

## Study Background

## Stakeholder Input

### Surveys

## Survey Results

Surveys

To questions posed to determine the status of existing coordination efforts, respondents indicated:

- ◆ One-third of respondents indicated that a local framework currently exists to bring together providers, agencies, and consumers in a coordination effort, and sustained support for transportation coordination planning exists in their community.
- ◆ Almost half of respondents reported they coordinate informally by referring clients to other providers.
- ◆ Other than the informal coordination occurring, there appears to be little momentum underway locally for formal transportation coordination efforts;
- ◆ There is no process in place to evaluate the potential for duplication of transportation services, nor to identify underutilized assets or service gaps;
- ◆ Obstacles cited which prevent transportation coordination, included lack of sufficient funding to support transportation coordination (this was the number one obstacle cited); lack of available vehicles; lack of a local “champion” to lead the coordination effort; regulatory restrictions; and turf issues.

Survey responses that indicated why coordination may not be occurring, or is limited, included: the vast majority of transportation provided is client only; funding limitations and regulatory restrictions most affect the passengers served (i.e. whether or not the service is client only or could be provided to other client groups).

**Focus Groups**

To gain a better understanding of existing coordination practices and to solicit stakeholder input into the potential strategies as part of the West Virginia Coordination Study, a series of focus groups were conducted across the state. A total of three (3) sessions were held, as follows:

<u>Date</u>	<u>No. Participants</u>	<u>Location</u>
September 15, 2005	6	Martinsburg
September 22, 2005	17	Charleston
September 23, 2005	28	Clarksburg

Participants in the three focus groups represented public transit providers, human service agencies, private-for-profit providers, cities, counties, state agencies, metropolitan planning organizations, and advocacy groups representing various consumer groups. The sessions were structured to gather input regarding the strengths and weaknesses of local human service agencies and public transit providers, opportunities available for coordination, obstacles to those coordination opportunities, and

## Surveys

recommended action items for the WVTCC to implement transportation coordination in West Virginia.

***Strengths***

Although responses varied by area of the state, strengths cited were the existing transportation network on which transportation coordination can be built; the current focus on transportation at the State level; the Provider Directory which is published by the WV DOT's Division of Public Transit; committed and well-trained transportation employees; and an existing inventory of well-maintained vehicles and equipment.

***Weaknesses***

A few of the weaknesses cited were actually counterparts to the identified strengths. For example, although the existing transportation employees were a strength, a weakness cited was staff turnover and the need to recruit and maintain quality staff. Also, although the Division of Public Transit's Provider Directory was cited as a strength, participants felt that the distribution needed to be expanded, especially to Department of Health and Human Resources (DHHR) staff and medical and hospital staff. Other weaknesses included the need for education of, and communication with State agency staff (such as DHHR), local medical staff (in particular hospital discharge planners), and the public; the need to bring private providers to the table at the state and local levels; the need for additional funding and incentives to coordinate; Medicaid billing restrictions which effectively prevent coordination of some trips between providers; turf issues; and "client dumping," especially for the longer, more expensive trips. Concern was also expressed with the lack of standard accountability and record keeping among the State agency programs and with the lack of coordination among state programs that provide funds, State and Federal, to purchase vehicles.

***Opportunities***

Participants were creative when it came to identifying opportunities for more coordination, including using coordination as a tool to expand service to evenings and weekends; establishing an 800 number for accessing transportation information in a county or region; forming local coordination committees; using high fuel prices as an incentive to coordinate; exploring technology to help streamline the billing and scheduling processes; incorporating private providers into the planning process, and improving communications among providers, the public, and state agency staffs.

***Obstacles***

Because challenges or obstacles can stifle, deter, or actually become a barrier to coordination, it is important to identify them up front so that they can be successfully overcome. With this goal in mind, participants

**Surveys**

identified several potential obstacles, including potential leaders of a coordination effort with already “full plates” and no time to commit to coordination; the perception by [some] agencies that they are client only; liability that could lead to increased insurance costs, or in some cases, the loss of insurance coverage; additional funding needed for coordination; the frailty of some clients who could not tolerate additional wait time; and regulatory requirements, such as drug and alcohol testing, which may have to be passed on to providers who either are not required to comply, or have lesser requirements.

***Recommendations***

Participants were then asked to identify recommendations to the WVTCC for a transportation coordination action plan. Recommendations included the formalization of the WVTCC to oversee and implement transportation coordination in the state; sharing best practices of coordination efforts already underway; developing and funding demonstration projects; streamlining State and Federal funding sources and billing procedures; and addressing Medicaid reimbursement rules and other regulatory restrictions. These recommendations, together with the information gathered during the survey process, were used as the basis for formulating the Study findings and recommendations.

**FUNDING SOURCES**

This section addresses one of the most difficult challenges in the implementation of coordination: documenting the amount and extent of human service agency funding used to support client transportation.

For this project, the most recent authoritative Federal guidance on available funding from the U.S. Government was used. Second, a survey of state agencies was conducted to determine their administration of various funding programs and the amounts of those funds allocated to passenger transportation. Finally, questions in the previous survey of transportation providers were used to identify major sources of passenger transportation funding in West Virginia.

In 2003, the General Accountability Office released a study that examined the Federal government’s role in providing support for human service agency programs that enable mobility for the nation’s transportation disadvantaged population. In all, 62 federal programs, most of which were programs administered by the Departments of Health and Human Services, Labor, Education, and Transportation, were identified that fund transportation services for transportation-disadvantaged populations. Sixteen of these have been identified as programs that regularly support transportation services; and an additional 11 programs have transportation

**Funding Sources**

**Funding Sources**

components (the listing of the 62 programs is included as Appendix D to the full report).

In West Virginia, the following sources of funding have been identified:

<u>Agency</u>	<u>Program/Activity</u>
Workforce West Virginia	Workforce Investment Act (WIA); Trade Adjustment Assistance.
West Virginia Department of Education and the Arts, Div. of Rehabilitation Services	Transportation identified as eligible activity under vocational rehabilitation and independent living programs.
West Virginia Department of Education, Office of School Transportation	Transportation provided for K through 12 for 55 county school systems and the WV School for Deaf and the Blind.
West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources Bureau of Behavioral Health and Health Facilities	Transportation provided as eligible activity of mental health services; all funds are allocated locally via block grants.
West Virginia Bureau of Senior Services	Older Americans Act Funding; and LIFE—Legislative Initiatives for the Elderly.
West Virginia Department of Transportation, Division of Public Transit	FTA Sections 5310 and 5311; Job Access and Reverse Commute; New Freedom Program (new program).
West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources Division on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse	Transportation provided as eligible activity of mental health services; Peer Services Program.

(Note: The above sources do not take into account Social Services Block Grant (SSBG), Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), Head Start, or Medicaid funds. Further investigation is needed to better understand the types and sources of all funds received and used for transportation services.)

**BEST PRACTICES IN COORDINATION**

Transportation agencies that have found successful means to overcome various obstacles to coordination were identified and showcased as models for possible replication. Many of these best practices are occurring in West Virginia. National examples, however, were also presented. While these national examples may not have applicability to West Virginia due to various institutional factors, concepts presented were designed to educate and promote thought and discussion among state agencies and transportation providers regarding potential future action for the state. Best practice areas and the agency or model used are noted below:

- ◆ State Funding Programs, Legislation, and Service Delivery
  - Pennsylvania – Innovative Funding
  - Florida – State Legislation and Coordinated Delivery Systems
  - Iowa – Legislation
  - Washington State – Coordination Planning and Plans
- ◆ Insurance
  - Licking County, Ohio – Policy and Procedure Manual
  - North Carolina – Legislation
  - Washington State – Self-insurance risk pools
  - Iowa -- Insurance Consortium
- ◆ Local Resource Utilization
  - Cabell-Wayne Association of the Blind, Inc. (CWAB) – Using a complement of available transportation services to meet consumer transportation needs
  - West Virginia Department of Rehabilitation Services -- Using a complement of available transportation services to meet consumer transportation needs
- ◆ Volunteers
  - Ride Connection, Portland, Oregon -- Volunteer Program
- ◆ Incentive funding/urban coordination
  - North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) – Human Service Transportation (HSTM) Program
  - Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) – Ohio Coordination Program (OCP)
  - Cuyahoga County, Ohio – Using local foundation grants and available State and Federal funds
- ◆ Maintenance
  - Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) – Regional Maintenance Center Program
- ◆ Cost allocation
  - Kansas Department of Transportation – Using fully allocated costs for Medicaid-contracted service
  - Maryland Transit Administration – Fully allocated cost model

**Best Practices**

- Alabama Department of Transportation (ADOT) – Using fully allocated costs in third party contracting
- ◆ Nontraditional Management Strategies
  - Winston-Salem Transit Authority (WSTA)/Trans-AID – Mobility Management Center
- ◆ Local cooperation
  - Kanawha Valley Regional Transit Authority (KRT) – Fuel Consortium
  - Mountain State, Inc. – Education/In-Service Presentations
  - Committee on Aging of Randolph County; Here and There Transit; Mountain State, Inc – Information and Referral
  - Mountain Line Transit Authority (MLTA), Morgantown, West Virginia – Local Cooperation
- ◆ Consolidation of Services
  - Buckwheat Express (operated by Preston County Seniors) – Consolidated System
  - Here and There Transit
  - Wayne Xpress
- ◆ Private Sector
  - Voyageur Bus Company, Duluth, MN – Coordination with the private sector

**WEST VIRGINIA COORDINATION STUDY – FINAL REPORT**

The complete final report will be available on the West Virginia Department of Transportation, Division of Public Transit's website after January 1, 2006. For further information, you may contact the Division Office at (304) 558-0428.

**Final Report**

## Appendix A

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Executive Order No. 5-04

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Updated 10/14/2005

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