Mobility Management

Mobility management is an innovative approach for managing and delivering coordinated transportation services to customers, including older adults, people with disabilities, and individuals with lower incomes. Changes in demographics, shifts in land use patterns, and the creation of new and different job markets require new approaches for providing transportation services, particularly for customers with special needs. Mobility management focuses on meeting individual customer needs through a wide range of transportation options and service providers. It also focuses on coordinating these services and providers in order to achieve a more efficient transportation service delivery system for public policy makers and taxpayers who underwrite the cost of service delivery.

Mobility managers serve as policy coordinators, operations service brokers, and customer travel navigators. As policy coordinators, mobility managers help communities develop coordination plans, programs, and policies, and build local partnerships. They also work to promote land-use policies that favor transit-oriented development, public transportation, and pedestrian access. As brokers, they coordinate transportation services among all customer groups, service providers, and funding agencies. And, as travel navigators, they work with human service agencies and/or workforce centers that coordinate the travel and trip planning needs of individuals who receive human service program assistance. Mobility management activities are eligible to receive funding

The mobility management approach differs from traditional transit services in several ways:

- Mobility management disaggregates service planning and markets in order to better serve individuals and the community. Traditional transit service planning aggregates demand on centralized, highly traveled routes of a transit system.

- Mobility management focuses on service diversity and a "family of transportation services" to reach a wide range of customers versus traditional transit systems that are built on the principle of unified regional service coverage. A "family of transportation services" is a wide range of travel options, services, and modes that are matched to community demographics and needs.

- Mobility management uses multiple transportation providers to offer the most efficient and effective service to all individuals. Traditional transit agencies typically use a single operator to deliver all services.

- Mobility management underscores the importance of service advocacy as a way to improve public transportation management and delivery. A mobility manager acts as a travel agent/service coordinator to seek the most effective means for meeting an individual's transportation needs. Transit agencies generally focus on the direct provision of services.

under SAFETEA-LU (Safe, Accountable, Flexible and Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users). Mobility management is an eligible capital expense under most U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) Federal Transit Administration (FTA) programs (5307, 5310, 5316, 5317, and

5318). This means FTA can fund 80 percent of mobil-ity management expenses. SAFETEA-LU also affords a new option to use non-DOT tranportation funding or service contracts to meet matching requirements. The law defines mobility management as "short-range planning and management activities and projects for improving coordination among public transportation and other transportation service providers." Mobility management activities eligible for SAFETEA-LU funding include:

- Operating transportation brokerages to coordinate service providers, funding resources, and customer needs;
- Coordinating transportation services for older adults, individuals with disabilities, and individuals with low incomes;
- Supporting local partnerships that coordinate trans-portation services;
- Staffing for the development and implementation of coordination plans;
- Providing travel training and trip planning activities for customers;
- Developing and operating traveler call centers to co-ordinate travel information, manage eligibility require-ments, and arrange customer travel; and
- Planning and implementing the acquisition and purchase of intelligent transportation technologies to operate a coordinated system. (See page four for additional information.)

Getting Started and Measuring Progress

Meeting the transportation needs of the community is no easy task, but it can be done if transportation providers, human services and workforce investment agencies, and the community work together to plan and implement services. Mobility management in-volves these key steps:

- Developing an inventory of available services;
- Identifying customer needs;
- Developing strategies to meet needs;
- Coordinating financial and other resources;
- Improving coordination through transportation bro-kerage systems;
- Training staff and volunteers;
- Promoting the use of innovative technologies, servic-es, and other methods to improve customer service and coordination; and
- Developing customer information and trip planning systems.

Measuring progress in developing and sustain-ing a coordinated system is an important aspect of mobility management. A logic model, developed for the United We Ride (UWR) initiative, can be used to measure a community's progress in developing a mobility management strategy. Like other logic models, the UWR model includes inputs, outputs,

and outcomes, and uses graphics to show relation-ships between elements in the model. It shows work being done to build a coordinated system, outlines system changes, and highlights accomplishments that occur along the way. The model can be found at http://www.unitedweride.gov/FINALUWRlogicmodel_perfmeasure.doc.

Mobility Managers in Practice

Albany Capital District Transportation Authority (CDTA): Trip Planners

CDTA employs three "trip planners" to advise riders on Job Access and Reverse Commute Program-funded activities and CDTA services. The trip planners were selected for their customer service skills and ability to relate to individuals receiving services. As individuals who formerly received Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), the trip planners bring an important perspective to the program.

The trip planners work with case managers and individuals who are eligible to receive TANF to prepare travel itineraries, conduct one-on-one travel training, and help new riders acquire the skills needed to use transit. Each trip planner focuses on a different aspect of the job. One speaks Spanish and acts as a liaison to the Puerto Rican and Dominican communities. Another trip planner provides information at a busy employment and training One-Stop Career Center. And the third acts as a "bus ambassador," rotating among several bus stations answering questions and providing information.

Paul Feldman, director of the Family Investment Center, a U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development-sponsored One-Stop Career Center affiliated with the Housing Authority in Schenectady, New York, praises the CDTA trip planning program: "The CDTA trip planner with whom we work is outstanding, providing people with lots of useful information." He also noted that the trip planner gives transportation orientations to staff and clients at the One-Stop Career Center and speaks with young mothers who are entering the workforce for the first time about how to ride the bus, and rides with them during their first several trips to make sure they are comfortable using the bus.

Portland TriMet

TriMet uses three approaches to manage the region's mobility needs: (1) the provision of fixed-route transit for the general public and paratransit for elderly citizens and individuals with disabilities, (2) the integration of other transportation providers to fill transit gaps, and (3) the incorporation of alternative transportation options, such as biking, carpools, and vanpools, to reduce the number of trips by automobile.

Historically, area transit service focused on getting people to work in downtown Portland during rush hours. In recent years, decentralized industrial areas and suburban employment centers increased the need for cross-town and suburb-to-suburb travel. In response, TriMet developed a transit investment plan that provides a framework for building a balanced network and coordinating its programs with the region's growth management efforts. TriMet also restructured its route network and schedules to improve service. For example, in May 2004, TriMet's MAX light-rail service opened in North Portland, an area recognized for its high concentration of low-income households. Service hours, formerly assigned to the bus route eliminated by MAX service, were reallocated to other bus routes in North Portland, including the Swan Island Industrial District that is home to many employers who provide relatively well paying entry-level jobs.

TriMet works with other transportation providers, employers, and transportation management associations (TMAs) to improve service quality, availability, and convenience. Two shuttles currently operate in the region with support from the Jewish Association for Retarded Citizens. The Tualatin Chamber of Commerce operates a shuttle service during peak periods that connects TriMet riders to this suburban job market. The Swan Island TMA provides evening shuttle service that connects riders to areas of Swan Island not served by TriMet after 7 p.m. on weekdays. Both projects serve as examples of filling transit service gaps – a geographic gap in the case of Tualatin and a time-of-day gap in the case of Swan Island.

Additionally, TriMet includes alternative transportation services and modes as additional options to address service gaps to demonstrate its commitment to the environment. Alternative transportation options can bridge the distance between transit and home or workplace, decrease the cost of commuting, and provide access to employment in areas that are difficult to reach by transit.

Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) Technologies Interface

The mobility management approach uses ITS technologies to make individualized service possible. ITS includes a broad range of communications, monitoring, scheduling, and dispatching technologies. These technologies can facilitate coordination, enhance safety, improve information sharing, optimize transportation routes, and reduce wait times, an important consideration for persons who are disabled and elderly. The following ITS technologies can be used to manage the operational side of mobility management strategies.

- Computer-aided dispatch (CAD), combined with an automatic vehicle location (AVL) system, facilitates coordination of passenger transfers between vehicles and/or transit systems, reroutes vehicles to meet passenger needs, and optimizes transportation routes. CAD can also be used to take reservations and schedule trips.
- AVL systems provide real-time location of vehicles equipped with a global positioning system (GPS). The GPS satellite transmits vehicle location information to the transit center. AVL, when combined with other technologies, optimizes dispatching, allows each vehicle to service more passengers, monitors on-time performance, and provides time-sensitive information to customers.
- Data management systems gather, manage, report, and store data relating to schedules, trips, billing, and customer information.
- Electronic fare payment and collection systems enable customers to use a variety of media to pay for transit trips and simplify fare collection for transit providers.
- In-vehicle diagnostics systems monitor the condition of transit vehicles. Real-time information can be passed on to the dispatch center via a radio data connection between the transit vehicle and central control. The system includes software that manages vehicle and parts maintenance records.

Recognizing the important contributions that ITS technologies can make to improving mobility and access, the USDOT launched the Mobility Services for All Americans (MSAA) initiative. MSAA complements the UWR campaign that requires federal agencies to work together to enhance transportation access, minimize duplication of services, and facilitate the most appropriate, cost-effective human service transportation. The MSAA initiative provided $2.7 million to eight communities to demonstrate how ITS can improve transit services for people with special needs. More information on the MSAA initiative is available at www.its.dot.gov.

Resources

For more information about UWR intiatives, 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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