



Transportation Challenges, Resources and Possible Solutions

Title of Event: *“Moving People From Welfare To Work”*

Date(s): July 7-8, 1998

Location: Westin Crown Center Hotel, Kansas City, Missouri

I. Summary

The ACF Welfare Peer Technical Assistance Network coordinated this workshop on behalf of the ACF Region VII office. The network is a contract from the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), Office of Family Assistance (OFA). The contractors for the Network are AFYA, Inc. and Caliber Associates. The purpose of this two-day technical assistance event was to identify the transportation challenges of participating states, examine other state’s initiatives that have addressed these challenges, identify available resources, and explore next steps to address these challenges. Additional topics included the Transportation Equity Act of the 21st Century (TEA-21) and the wealth of resources available via the National Transit Resource Center, operated by the Community Transportation Association of America. This summary highlights the main points from the workshop discussions.

II. Participants

Workshop participants included TANF and transportation representatives from Colorado, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Missouri, Nebraska, New Jersey, Texas, and Utah. Representatives from the ACF region VII and VIII office, and the central office were also present. Speakers included Linda Lewis, Regional Administrator, ACF Region VII; Joan Roeseler, Director of Planning and Program Development, Federal Transit Administration (FTA), Region VII; James Jarzab, Department Manager, Strategic Planning, Pace Suburban Bus, Arlington Heights, IL; Pat Loose, Transit Grants Coordinator, Colorado Department of Transportation; Connie Ulmer, Policy Specialist, Kansas Department of Social and Rehabilitative Services; Diane Schonyers, Policy Analyst, New Jersey Department of Human Services; and Carolyn Jeskey, National Transit Resource Center, Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA).

I. Session Summary Part I

A. State transportation priority challenges

State TANF representatives and state transportation representatives teamed up to identify the top challenges currently facing their states in the area of transportation and welfare reform. ACF regional office representatives also contributed their comments to their respective states. Each individual state's findings seemed to follow the same common themes. These themes and their related points are summarized below.

1. Implications for Rural Communities

- a. distances- long commutes between where people live (affordable housing) and where employment centers are located (usually only one car per two earner household)
- b. services
 1. availability- limited or total lack of public transportation services in rural areas including public transit, car, and van pools (additional issue of safety of passengers waiting in remote areas)
 2. hours- expanded hours for services does not exist or is limited
- c. funding- lack of incentives for both TANF providers and employers to provide funding for existing or new transportation services for employment (inadequate funding for rural transit leaves 40% of communities without public transit)
- d. Indian reservations- unique distances, services, and employment center challenges

2. Implications for Cities

- a. Public transit systems
 1. scheduling priorities- shift workers, level of service, times of day, direction, length of trip, weekday off peak hours, weekends, and night time commuters are all not given enough priority currently by transit systems
 2. reverse commute issue (over 30% of the labor force in many cities going to suburbs--spatial mismatch of TANF clients' home location vs. existing jobs in the suburbs)
 3. public opinion of public transportation-many people view it negatively and inadequate and see driving as their only option (only 6% of national TANF population have access to reliable cars)
 4. Funding-lack of incentives for both TANF providers and employers to provide funding for existing or new transportation services for employment

3. Coordination and Resource Utilization

- a. coordination
 1. state level
 - a. interagency commitment and cooperation needed between agencies, i.e. mental health, aging, etc.

- b. agencies need common goals, less barriers, and cooperation among program rules/policies
- 2. local level
 - a. pooling of resources and services, mileages, and urban vs. suburban (political barriers) needs to be addressed
 - b. lack of community support for public transportation
 - c. resource utilization
 - 1. high cost of implementing additional transit services - buying vehicles or using state surplus vehicles
 - 2. need to use existing resources more efficiently to serve all transit dependent populations
 - 3. transitional transportation dollars- (if utilized) how to handle policy decisions on provision of these funds
 - d. more linkages with employers needed

B. Action Plan Development

After discussing a variety of initiatives taking place in various states, the implications of TEA-21, and hearing about the resources and information available from the National Transit Resource Center, the states identified lessons learned from the workshop, and next steps they would take to address their state's challenges. What follows is by no means a complete action plan that addresses these challenges. It merely serves as a starting point indicated by the states present. Specific names of states have been deleted in order to present a more concise overall picture that any state (whether they attended the workshop or not) might benefit from the information.

1. Characteristics of Possibilities- states identified common program characteristics that would most likely lead to a successful initiative and/or program. These are listed below.
 - funding- available and identified
 - communication among key players (TANF offices, state transportation, local public transit, state department of social services, health departments, employment offices, employers, community groups, etc.)
 - committed leadership by decision makers
 - risk taking by parties involved
 - understanding of the problem (a knowledge base)
 - active involvement and collaboration of key players
 - a common goal identified and agreed upon by all parties involved
 - power sources identified
 - understanding the politics of the current state/local climate ("political savvy")
 - ability to think "out of the box"
 - availability and accessibility to data
 - open to partnerships
 - history of useful cooperation and collaboration and also of addressing problems together
 - common understanding of each other and positive relationships between key players

2. Lessons learned and next steps- The chart below summarizes individual state’s comments. Although the states’ challenges identified at the beginning of the workshop centered around the themes of rural, urban, and coordination/resource utilization, their action planning did not. Every single key learning and next step the states reported centered around the three themes of communication, cooperation, and collaboration (with strong leadership) within a background of strategic thinking (“thinking outside the box”).

Coordination, Cooperation, and Collaboration

Lessons Learned	Next Steps
1. Many states realized they are on the right track, committed to allocating TANF money to transportation, and already have a spirit of cooperation and coordination with committed leadership in place within their state.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Share information gained at the workshop with interagency task force. ▪ Explore funds for transitional transportation. ▪ Social services and department of transportation meet to create an action plan. ▪ Social services and transportation representatives jointly attend local meetings. ▪ Social services and dept. of transportation meet to discuss common goals and how to increase communication and coordination.
2. There are more resources available locally than many states imagined.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Examine the possibility of implementing local van pools, car programs, and insurance pools.
3. Involvement of employers should not be overlooked. Partnerships are critical.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Invite social services, transportation, transit, and employers to local job fairs. ▪ Work on establishing a committed partnership with open communication and committed leadership.
4. Local level coordination should be from a regional approach.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Establish an intergovernmental work group that includes all major players from social services, transportation, labor, etc.
5. Involve state legislative staffs as much as possible.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Utilize task forces currently in place to discuss transportation issues. ▪ Refer to own state and other state task force’s research/study findings to educate legislatures about transportation priorities. ▪ Remember to use Welfare to Work money in planning for use of state grant moneys in the area of transportation.

II. Session Summary - Part II

A. Implications for rural communities

1. *Colorado Works*- local initiative in each of the state's 63 counties
 - a. each county sets its own policy and sanctions for non-participation
 - b. counties have performance standards, maintenance of effort, are reimbursed from the state department of health and human services, and provide matching funds for TANF
 - c. experimenting with deviated routes for transit providers and utilizing TANF clients as drivers
 - d. *county express*- local program involving partnership with local jobs office and TANF representative
 - e. Denver, Colorado- Bridges to Work demonstration site
(Bridges to Work is a national demonstration program that was launched in 1996 by the U.S. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development (along with private foundations) in cooperation with the FTA. The program's intent is to explore new ways to link urban welfare recipients with suburban jobs. There are currently five demonstration project sites nationwide.)
2. Kansas
 - a. Kansas City, Kansas- JOB LINKS demonstration site
(JOBLINKS is a national demonstration program that was launched in 1995 by the FTA. Its focus is on incorporating transportation and human services interventions into one package. It is sponsored by CTAA and has sixteen demonstration projects in twelve states.
 - b. local mapping project- created to assess the transportation needs of Topeka, KS Welfare to Work participants. Participating agencies include transit authorities, and representatives from the department of social and rehabilitation services, community resource council, dept. of transportation, and the county metropolitan planning agency
 - c. proposal to establish the CARS (cash assistance replacement system) program- a state vehicle project providing for the sale of state surplus vehicles to welfare participants who have transportation needs which cannot be met through existing public transportation resources
3. Other state initiatives discussed (state representatives not in attendance)
 - a. Tennessee
 1. use of transportation brokers who are part of private industry councils that assess a client's needs within a particular service delivery area
 2. Wheels for Work (*The First Wheels Program*)- coordinating with community organizations, faith organizations, local social services, and local transportation providers
 - b. North Carolina- coordination of efforts between the North Carolina Department of Transportation-Public Transportation Division, the North Carolina Division of Social Services, and the North Carolina

- Board of Education's Department of Public Instruction on a variety of rural as well as state-wide initiatives
- c. Florida's (Orlando) LYNX and WAGES Transportation Program- transportation brokers coordinate rides for clients and work with caseworkers
 - d. Illinois' Rides Mass Transit Division- large area mass transit system providing service through established routes and a demand response system (six rural counties are served)

B. Implications for Cities

1. Illinois

- a. Pace Suburban Bus Service- accommodating suburb-to-suburb trips
 - 1. key elements include: service coordination (schedules and transfers), employer outreach (assess employer needs and design custom services), service options (types of vehicles and service caters to market niches), partnerships (coordinate services with job placement and training organizations)
 - 2. "know your riders"- many riders are not job ready, may be illiterate, or do not speak English
- b. Suburban Job-Link Corporation- connecting inner city residents with employment opportunities in Chicago's suburbs

2. New Jersey

- a. Geographic information system (GIS) analysis- current state-wide study that analyzes state transportation needs by county
 - 1. examining who, among WorkFirst New Jersey participants, is using the public transit systems
 - 2. investigating where riders are going and what their specific needs are
- b. *Get A Job, Get A Ride*- state pilot program providing one month of free transportation (bus or train pass) on New Jersey Transit to any eligible welfare recipient engaged in work or work training activities. This program is an extension of the *WorkPass Program* (training on using the public transit system).
- c. New Jersey County Transportation Coordination Planning- every county is developing transportation coordination plans to address gaps in the provision of transportation services for WorkFirst New Jersey participants, seniors, the disabled, and low income job seekers.

3. Michigan

- a. Michigan Works Transportation Survey Summary- information gathered from the Michigan Works Transportation Directors in four areas:
 - 1. the level of transportation coordination in their area
 - 2. the types of transportation providers within their service delivery area
 - 3. the kinds of transportation problems faced

4. the best long term solutions in meeting the transportation needs of the clients they serve
- b. Project Zero- coordination efforts between the Michigan Department of Transportation, the Bureau of Urban and Public Transportation, the Family Independence Agency, and the Michigan Jobs Commission. The project's goal is to reduce to zero the number of public assistance households in the pilot areas without earned income.
- c. SMART- *Get A Job, Get A Ride* program in Southeast Michigan (Detroit)
4. Virginia's JAUNT, Inc.- transit provider combining public, fare paying passengers with clients of human service agencies (JAUNT representative not in attendance)

C. Implications of the "Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century" or "TEA-21" (\$217 billion plan)

1. The bill maintains the long standing structure of a transit program split among:
 - a. formula grants to states and urbanized areas
 - b. major capital grants for rail and bus transit modes
 - c. grants for transit planning and research
2. The bill maintains the long-standing practice of using both mass transit account trust funds (\$29.34 billion) and general federal revenues (\$6.66 billion) for financing the transit program.
 - a. The total allocated for transit is \$41.0 billion with \$36 billion of this amount guaranteed or "walled off." (The remaining \$5.0 billion is unprotected or not guaranteed.)
 - b. These "firewalls" assure transit an estimated 80 % return on authorized funding levels. (This is the first time in the transit program's history that it has received guaranteed funding.)
3. Total transit funding under the bill increases by 31% with formula funds growing by 24% and capital grants swelling by 42 %.
4. *Access to Jobs* provision in TEA-21- \$150 million allocated for this new program over the next six years
 - a. \$10 million must be spent on reverse commute projects
 - b. Community transportation providers in all 50 states will be able to apply for funding
 1. 60% for urbanized areas over 200,000
 2. 20% for urbanized areas under 200,000
 3. 20% for rural areas (under 50,000)
 - c. The Federal Transit Administration will use the following considerations regarding Access to Jobs grant requests
 1. the population of welfare recipients in the project target area
 2. the extent to which the applicant demonstrates coordination with existing public and human services transit agencies
 3. the innovativeness of the approach
5. The Federal Transit Administration plans to hold several hearings and focus groups in the coming months to gather state input regarding how the new bill

should be implemented. More information will be published and posted on the Federal Transit Administration's Website at <http://www.fta.dot.gov/wtw/>

- D. Potential role of the Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA)
1. CTAA is an association of organizations and individuals committed to improving mobility for all people.
 2. CTAA maintains an active member services and development office.
 3. CTAA's nationwide network of State Delegates enables it to maintain an active presence in each state and to rapidly distribute information to its members.
 4. Under contract with the Federal Transit Administration, CTAA operates the Federal Transit Resource Center offering a vast amount of welfare related transportation information.
 5. CTAA has recently published *Access to Jobs - A Guide to Innovative Practices in Welfare-to-Work Transportation: A report that summarizes welfare reform transportation challenges and reviews the welfare-to-work activities in several states, metropolitan planning organizations, and public mass transit agencies. In addition, the report details the most pertinent research relating to welfare transportation, federal funding sources for welfare transportation, and highlights the current technical assistance efforts on the subject.*
 6. CTAA coordinates and reports on the various nation-wide JOBLINKS demonstration projects.

7. Points of contact for CTAA:

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III. Final Remarks

Workshop attendees agreed that there are many more promising initiatives and programs taking place nationwide for welfare reform in the area of transportation than they previously realized. They were pleasantly surprised to find that they had peers across the nation struggling with similar transportation issues. The group concluded that the key to fully utilizing this technical assistance is to select the transportation initiatives being implemented in states that best address their current situation. The critical challenge will be to implement a version of these newly learned initiatives that is tailored to match their state's specific challenges. For more information on the state initiatives mentioned in this report, TEA-21, CTAA, or the ACF Welfare Peer Technical Assistance Network, please

contact either Blake Austensen (ext. 215) or Paul Purnell (ext. 214) of AFYA, Inc. at (301) 270-0841. The Welfare Peer Technical Assistance Network is pleased to be contributing to the progress that states are making in this critical area of welfare reform.