



Transportation Mobility Management

By James B. Reed

Transportation mobility refers to easy movement of people and goods.

Transportation mobility refers to the ease by which people and goods move throughout a community and beyond. Even with high gasoline prices, most people can accomplish the basics—getting to work or school, making necessary purchases, traveling to medical appointments, and enjoying entertainment and recreation. Citizens who are disabled, elderly or poor, however, must rely on publicly funded transportation that historically has been difficult to navigate and access. The difficulty in navigating the system of various providers stems in part from fragmented service that often is duplicative and inconsistent. A new emphasis on "mobility management" promises to provide better access to and service for necessary transportation.

Mobility management makes innovative use of existing transportation systems.

What Is Mobility Management? Mobility management encourages coordination and resource sharing among various state agencies. As defined by the Federal Transit Administration, "Mobility management is an approach to service development and management that focuses on individualized customer markets and involves establishing a variety of services tailored to meet the needs of those markets." Another way to consider mobility management is a community travel agent with access to a family of transportation services. Mobility management includes the following policies:

- Providing various options, such as public transportation, vanpool, ride-share and demand-responsive services;
- Developing technologies to increase travel options and traveler convenience;
- Using a one-call system to provide information and access to all travel options; and
- Using congestion management strategies and coordinating public transportation with infrastructure and land use planning.

Improving public transportation will become more important as the American population ages. Legislatures may find solutions to these concerns by developing a comprehensive mobility management policy. All levels of government have begun to look at coordinating various types of transportation services to better serve customers and to better use scarce public funds. At least 12 states have passed legislation to improve coordination; mobility management is a key component.

Some states hire mobility managers to implement policies.

State Action Some state and local governments have hired mobility managers to design, coordinate or navigate the network of available transportation and mobility services. The Greater Minnesota Action Plan identifies the following main functions of a mobility manager:

- Matching trip requests with an appropriate ride through a call center;
- Taking calls, scheduling rides and dispatching;

- Contracting with transportation providers, confirming rider eligibility and processing payments; and
- Overseeing insurance, driver qualifications and compliance.

Florida, Maryland, North Carolina, Ohio and Washington, among others, have made strides to improve their transportation systems. The Legislature established The Florida Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged in 1979 to meet the needs of those who lack transportation due to physical or mental disability, age or income. Each county has a community transportation coordinator. Together, they serve an estimated 697,000 people annually.

Florida Transportation Disadvantaged Trust Fund		
Source	Amount	Percent of Fund
Medicaid Non-Emergency	\$68.7 million	65%
Vehicle Registration Fee, \$1.50	\$20.7 million	18
Public Transit Block Grant	\$10.7 million	10
From Transportation Trust Fund	\$6 million	5
Rural Capital program	\$1.4 million	1.25
\$5 of Disability Parking Permit	\$208,000	.2
Voluntary \$1 Tax Check-Off	\$30,000	.03
TOTAL	\$106 million	100%

Florida's coordination efforts produced a well-developed system.

A state trust fund supports the work of the state agencies and community coordinators. The fund, supported by fees, taxes, general revenue and federal funds, receives \$106 million annually. Since 2004, the commission has managed the Agency for Health Care Administration's Medicaid non-emergency transportation program, which accounts for 65 percent of program funds (see table). Florida realizes an overall return on investment of \$8.35 for every \$1 spent on its transportation programs for the disadvantaged.

Local Action. Trans-AID, a division of the Winston-Salem Transit Authority in North Carolina, exemplifies a successful mobility management program. Since 1978, Trans-AID has coordinated urban and rural transportation for virtually all needs in the Forsyth County area. It specializes in advance reservations and curb-to-curb transportation, primarily for the elderly and disabled, complementing its fixed-route bus service. Its mobility management center links more than 100,000 customers to rides annually, using computerized scheduling and dispatching.

Federal Action The U.S. Government Accountability Office in 2003 identified 62 federal programs, located in 14 federal agencies, that provide transportation to disadvantaged people. A February 2004 executive order created national momentum for a coordinated approach to provide these services. A federal initiative, United We Ride, set goals and provided states with grants to better coordinate human services transportation. The 2005 transportation reauthorization, SAFETEA-LU, requires states and localities that receive certain federal transit money to create coordinated human service transportation plans.

States that receive certain federal transit money must create coordinated human transportation plans.

Resource

National Conference of State Legislatures. *Coordinated Human Service Transportation: State Legislative Approaches*. Denver: NCSL, 2005; www.ncsl.org/bookstore/productdetail.htm?prodid=014232PDF.

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United We Ride, www.unitedweride.gov/