

Regional Human Service Transportation Coordinating Councils: Synthesis, Case Studies and Directory

Prepared for the Federal Transit Administration
and the U.S. Department of Labor

By Jaime Rall and Nicholas J. Farber



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National Conference of State Legislatures

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January 2012

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INTRODUCTION

The current complex, fragmented and uncoordinated intergovernmental landscape of transportation can waste public resources and create barriers for people who need transportation assistance—particularly transportation disadvantaged individuals who because of age, disability or income cannot afford or safely operate a vehicle.

***AN ESTIMATED
44,000 LEVELS
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PRIVATE
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OTHER
INDIVIDUALS ARE
INVOLVED IN
TRANSPORTATION
SERVICE
PROVISION.***

By one estimate, approximately 44,000 levels of government—each with its own laws or regulations—and thousands of nonprofits, private companies and individuals are involved in transportation service provision in the United States. Many federal, state and local agencies provide or support specialized services for transportation disadvantaged populations. Government, nonprofit and for-profit programs serve rural and urban communities, low-income and indigent populations, veterans, people with disabilities, older adults and Medicaid recipients. Public and private agencies that administer or refer clients to human service transportation programs may have different goals, serve different populations, and receive funds from different sources, each source with its own rules and restrictions. Eligibility and accountability standards, vehicle needs, operating procedures, routes and other factors may also vary greatly across organizations. At the local level, programs can differ across city or county boundaries.

The large number, diversity and dispersion of transportation programs can create service duplications in some areas and gaps in others, underutilization of resources, inconsistent safety standards and customer inconvenience. Funding shortfalls, policy and implementation failures, and lack of coordination can leave many who need transportation with few or no options.

To combat these problems, governmental bodies, human service organizations and transportation planners have advocated improved coordination among human service agencies, transportation providers—of both public transit and of services targeted to disadvantaged populations—and other stakeholders. When these entities work together to jointly accomplish their objectives, it can reduce or eliminate many problems caused by numerous specialized programs. This process is called “human service transportation coordination.” Coordination generally means better resource management, shared power and responsibility among agencies, and shared management and funding.¹ When properly implemented, coordination can improve transportation access, reduce confusion for transportation users and providers, and yield a significantly more efficient use of public resources—a key benefit when budgets are tight.

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Improved use of public transportation resources will be increasingly necessary because of the growing mobility needs of older adults. According to the Administration on Aging, by 2030, 19.1 percent of the population or about 72.1 million people will be over the age of 65—more than twice their number in 2000.² Most of this population growth will take place in automobile-centric suburbs. In addition, of Americans over age 65, 21 percent do not drive; commonly cited reasons include lack of access to a vehicle, declining health and safety concerns.³ This reduced mobility has a direct and often debilitating effect on older Americans’ independence. More than 50 percent of non-drivers over age 65 normally do not leave home most days, due in part to a lack of transportation options.⁴

The National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL), in cooperation with the Federal Transit Administration and the U.S. Department of Labor, has for several years worked to provide state legislatures and other stakeholders with reliable, balanced information to support the evaluation and improvement of transportation coordination in their jurisdictions. This report on regional coordinating councils is the next step in that effort. It begins with an assessment of how coordinating councils work to improve transportation access, including working definitions and a 50-state snapshot of where both state and regional councils now exist. The next sections explain how regional coordinating councils are complementary to state efforts and provide case studies of regional councils in five states. A look ahead to the future of regional coordinating councils, with a list of factors that can help support their success, concludes the analysis. In addition, a comprehensive state-by-state directory of regional coordinating councils in the United States—with contact information—accompanies this report as a separate document.

¹ Transit Cooperative Research Program, *Economic Benefits of Coordinating Human Service Transportation and Transit Services* [TCRP Report 91], 2003, http://onlinepubs.trb.org/onlinepubs/tcrp/tcrp_rpt_91.pdf.

² Administration on Aging, *Aging Statistics*, http://www.aoa.gov/aoaroot/aging_statistics/index.aspx (last visited September 9, 2011).

³ Linda Bailey, *Aging Americans: Stranded Without Options* (Washington D.C.: Surface Transportation Policy Project, 2004).

⁴ *Ibid.*

COORDINATING COUNCILS WORK TO IMPROVE TRANSPORTATION ACCESS

COORDINATING COUNCILS AT ALL LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT ARE GROUPS OF DIVERSE ORGANIZATIONS THAT ACTIVELY WORK TOGETHER TO PROVIDE THE BEST POSSIBLE SERVICE, ACCESS AND MOBILITY TO INDIVIDUALS WHO MAY LACK OTHER OPTIONS.

To facilitate better coordination of transportation activities related to the provision of human services, many states, regions and localities have created coordinating councils. Coordinating councils are, in the simplest sense, groups of diverse organizations that actively work together on an ongoing basis to better coordinate and provide transportation services to people who require transportation assistance. Their main objectives are typically to identify service needs, gaps and duplication as well as opportunities for collaboration. Councils may also work to coordinate the effective and efficient use of resources among their organizational members.⁵ The common goal is to provide the best possible service, access and mobility to individuals who may lack other options.

Coordinating councils operate at all levels of government. Many councils were created under United We Ride, a national initiative established in 2004 by the then-new Coordinating Council on Access and Mobility (CCAM) to support state and local coordination efforts. Many coordination efforts, however, also pre-date the United We Ride initiative. For example, a number of local coordinated efforts were undertaken by local transit providers and human services agencies in the 1970s and 1980s, in some cases with other state or federal support.⁶

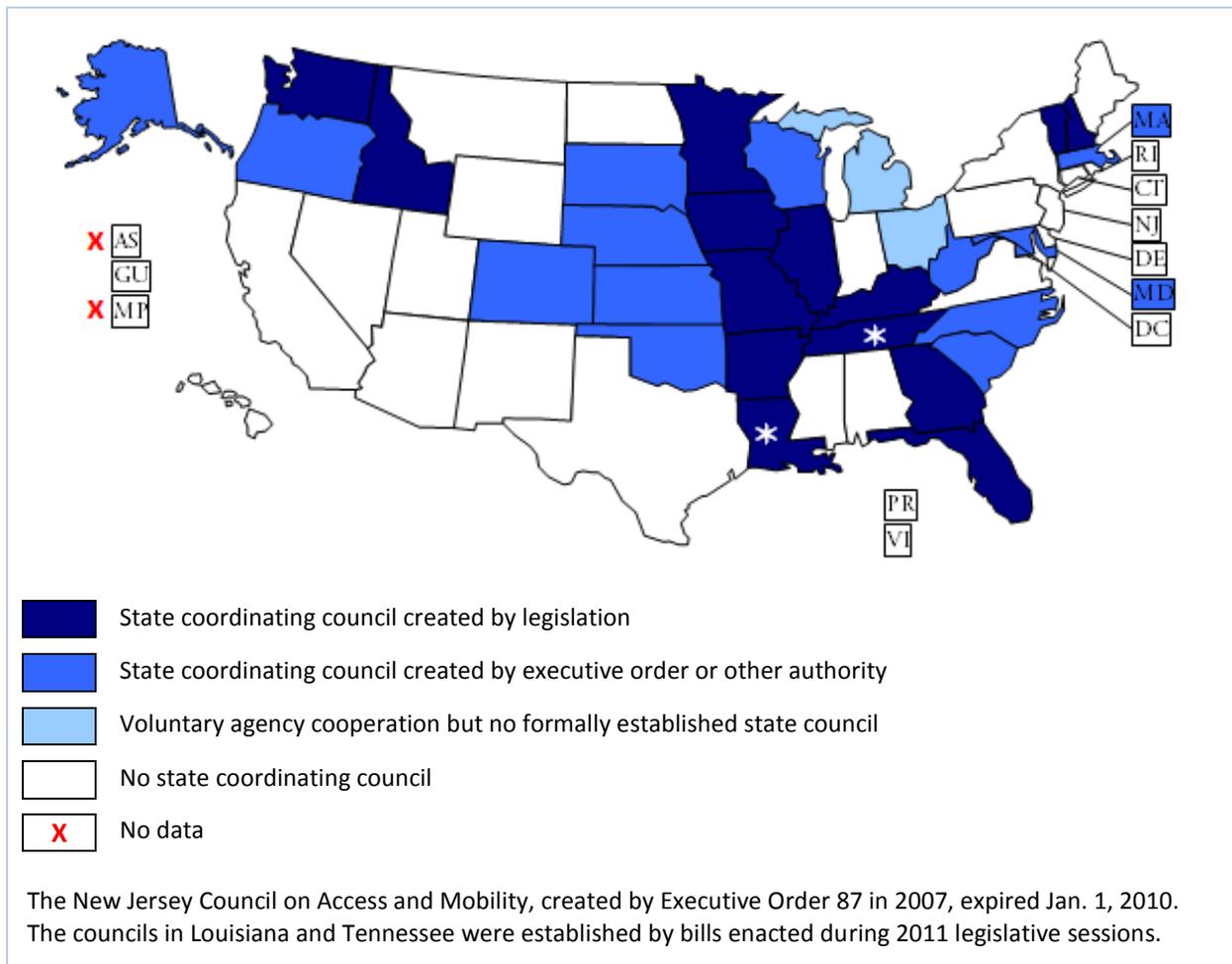
At the state level, as of Dec. 2011, 27 states had created formal, state-level coordinating councils, 14 in statute and 13 by executive order or other authority (Figure 1). Two other states—Michigan and Ohio—had voluntary agency cooperation but not formally established state coordinating councils as such. State council members often include representatives of state agencies including departments of transportation, health, veterans affairs and workforce development. Local governments that have a role in transportation; transit agencies and other service providers; residential care facilities; and nonprofits that represent people with disabilities and senior citizens may also be included. (More details about state councils are available in the 2010 NCSL report, *State Human Service Transportation Coordinating Councils: An Overview and State Profiles*.⁷)

⁵ Angela Schreffler, DRMAC, personal communication, Dec. 8, 2011; Federal Transit Administration, *New Freedom Program Guidance and Application Instructions* [FTA Circular 9045.1], 2007, http://www.fta.dot.gov/documents/FTA_C_9045.1_New_Freedom.pdf; Ohio DOT, *Coordinating Councils*, 2011, <http://www.dot.state.oh.us/Divisions/Planning/Transit/Pages/CoordinationCouncils.aspx>.

⁶ Transit Cooperative Research Program, *Strategies to Increase Coordination of Transportation Services for the Transportation Disadvantaged* [TCRP Report 105], 2004, http://onlinepubs.trb.org/onlinepubs/tcrp/tcrp_rpt_105.pdf.

⁷ This report and subsequently published in-depth state profiles are online at <http://www.ncsl.org/?tabid=20357>.

Figure 1. State coordinating councils



In addition, as of Dec. 2011 at least 29 states reported having at least one coordinating council at the regional level (Figure 2). Regional coordinating councils differ in terms of how they were formed—i.e., by statute or another initiative—and whether a council exists for each region of the state, or only in select areas. They also vary widely in terms of formality, complexity, size, membership and activities, largely because each must respond to unique regional priorities and circumstances. For example, councils in rural areas tend to more often provide direct transportation services where no other option exists, whereas councils in urban areas typically coordinate across other service providers but are less likely to provide services themselves.⁸

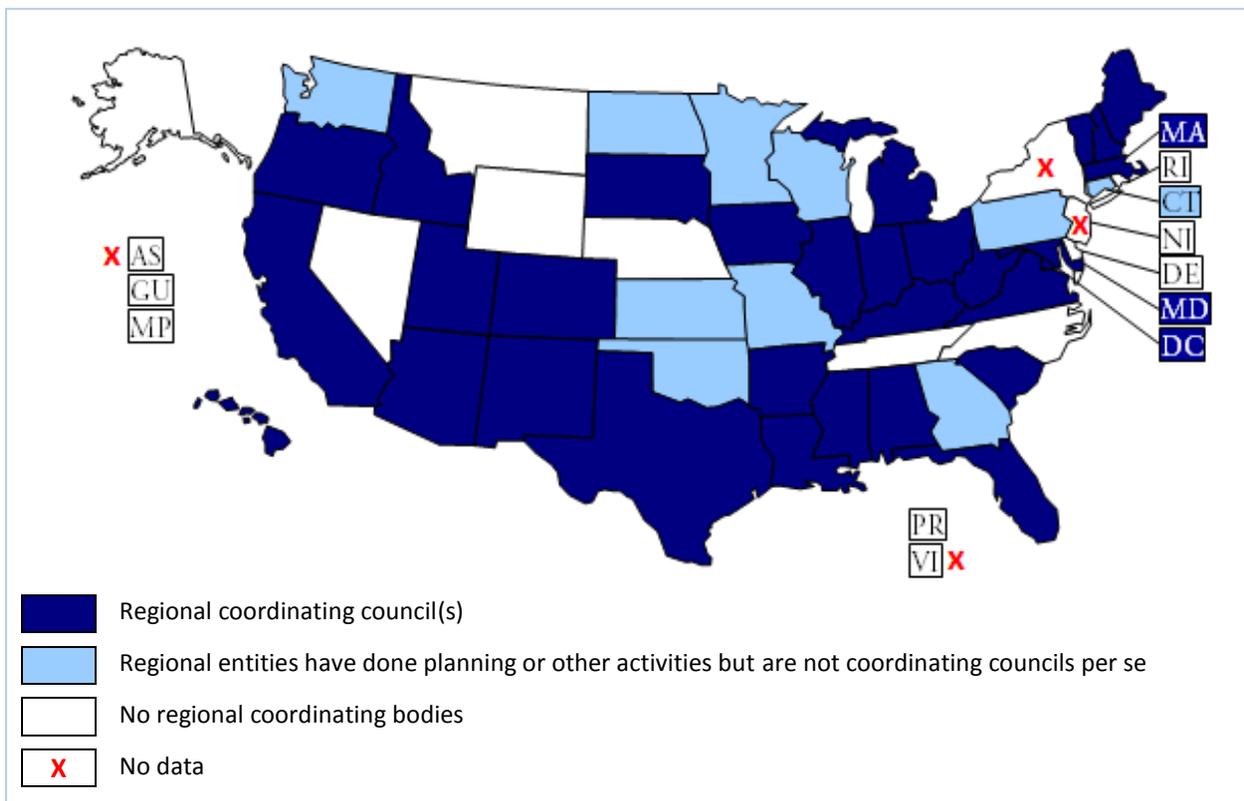
⁸ Suzanne O’Neill, Transit Plus, personal communication, Oct. 25, 2011; Angela Schreffler, DRMAC, personal communication, Dec. 8, 2011.

Due partly to this necessary diversity, no common definition of regional coordinating councils is known to exist. For the purposes of this brief, the working definition of regional coordinating councils is that they are **multidisciplinary**, in that they coordinate among diverse transportation and human services providers; **regional**, in that they coordinate across multiple cities, counties or other local jurisdictions; and **ongoing**, in that they engage in active, ongoing coordination, not just coordination planning or other intermittent activities.

REGIONAL COORDINATING COUNCILS ARE:

- **Multidisciplinary**
They coordinate among diverse transportation and human services providers.
- **Regional**
They coordinate across multiple cities, counties or other local jurisdictions.
- **Ongoing**
They engage in active, ongoing coordination, not just coordination planning or other intermittent activities.

Figure 2. Regional coordinating councils



Membership of regional coordinating councils may include counties and cities; metropolitan planning organizations or councils of governments; state or local human services or transportation agencies; public transit and specialized transportation providers; social service nonprofits; for-profit transportation providers such as taxi companies; disability organizations;

funding agencies; medical providers; workforce boards; housing authorities; advocates for human service client groups; veterans service offices; United Way; faith-based entities; volunteer driver groups; senior organizations such as AARP or local senior centers; citizen members; and other stakeholders. In addition, representatives from state or local coordinating councils, where those also exist, may participate in coordination at the regional level.

Possible activities of regional coordinating councils—in addition to the ongoing convening and facilitation of human service organizations and transportation providers for coordination purposes—may include information and referral services; creating policies and procedures; monitoring transportation services for quality and cost-effectiveness; assessing service levels and needs; seeking, prioritizing grant applications for, or otherwise coordinating funding; transportation planning and studies; providing or contracting for service where needed; offering training and technical assistance; creating task forces to address special regional issues; and coordinating service with state or other regional councils.⁹ Activities also often include a mobility management component, such as brokering and sharing information about available transportation services through written guides, call centers or online resources.¹⁰

**COORDINATED PUBLIC
TRANSIT-HUMAN SERVICES
TRANSPORTATION PLANS
ARE REQUIRED TO RECEIVE
FUNDS FROM THESE FTA
PROGRAMS:**

- **49 U.S.C. §5310**
*Special Needs of Elderly
Individuals and Individuals
with Disabilities*
- **49 U.S.C. §5316**
*Job Access and Reverse
Commute (JARC)*
- **49 U.S.C. §5317**
New Freedom

*But not all entities that
complete these plans are
regional coordinating
councils—or vice versa.*

As shown on Figure 2, besides the 29 states with regional coordinating councils, 10 states reported having entities that have taken on certain regional coordination activities, even if they do not meet fully the working definition of a regional coordinating council. In Minnesota, Missouri, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Washington and Wisconsin, for example, regional bodies have completed the “locally developed, coordinated public transit-human services transportation plans” required by the current federal surface transportation law (SAFETEA-LU, passed in 2005) as a condition for receiving funding from certain Federal Transit Administration (FTA) programs. Entities must complete these plans to be eligible for funds from 49 U.S.C. §5310 (Special Needs of Elderly Individuals and Individuals with Disabilities); 49 U.S.C. §5316 (Job Access and Reverse Commute, or JARC); or 49 U.S.C. §5317 (New Freedom). Only entities that wish to be funded by these programs must complete the plans, however; they are not otherwise federally required. The express intent of this planning requirement, as with coordination generally, is to “bring the right people to the table to discuss human services transportation issues and identify opportunities to assist more people, reduce service gaps and overlaps, and increase the cost effectiveness of the services provided.”¹¹

⁹ Suzanne O’Neill and Margi Ness, *Establishing Local and Regional Coordinating Councils*, PowerPoint presentation to the Community Transportation Association EXPO, June 2009.

¹⁰ Angela Schreffler, DRMAC, personal communication, Dec. 8, 2011.

¹¹ National Cooperative Highway Research Program, *Research Results Digest 354: A Review of Human Services Transportation Plans and Grant Programs*, 2011, http://onlinepubs.trb.org/onlinepubs/nchrp/nchrp_rrd_354.pdf.

The completion of these plans represents a significant amount of coordination. The plans must identify the transportation needs of individuals with disabilities, older adults and people with low incomes; provide strategies for meeting those local needs; and prioritize transportation services for funding and implementation. Further, they must be developed through a process that consists of representatives of public, private and nonprofit transportation and human services providers with participation by the public.¹² The requirement seems, at least to some extent, to be achieving its goals; 55 percent of survey respondents in a recent National Cooperative Highway Research Program study reported that coordination was better in their jurisdictions as a result of having gone through this planning process.¹³

This planning process, however, is distinct from—although it often overlaps with—the existence of a regional coordinating council that works to more effectively meet the transportation needs of human service and public transit clients on an ongoing basis. Although some regional coordinating councils as defined here have completed these plans to receive federal funding, other entities have done so without also engaging in ongoing coordination outside of the planning process, which typically takes place every four to five years.¹⁴

THE COMPLEMENTARY ROLES OF STATE AND REGIONAL COORDINATING COUNCILS

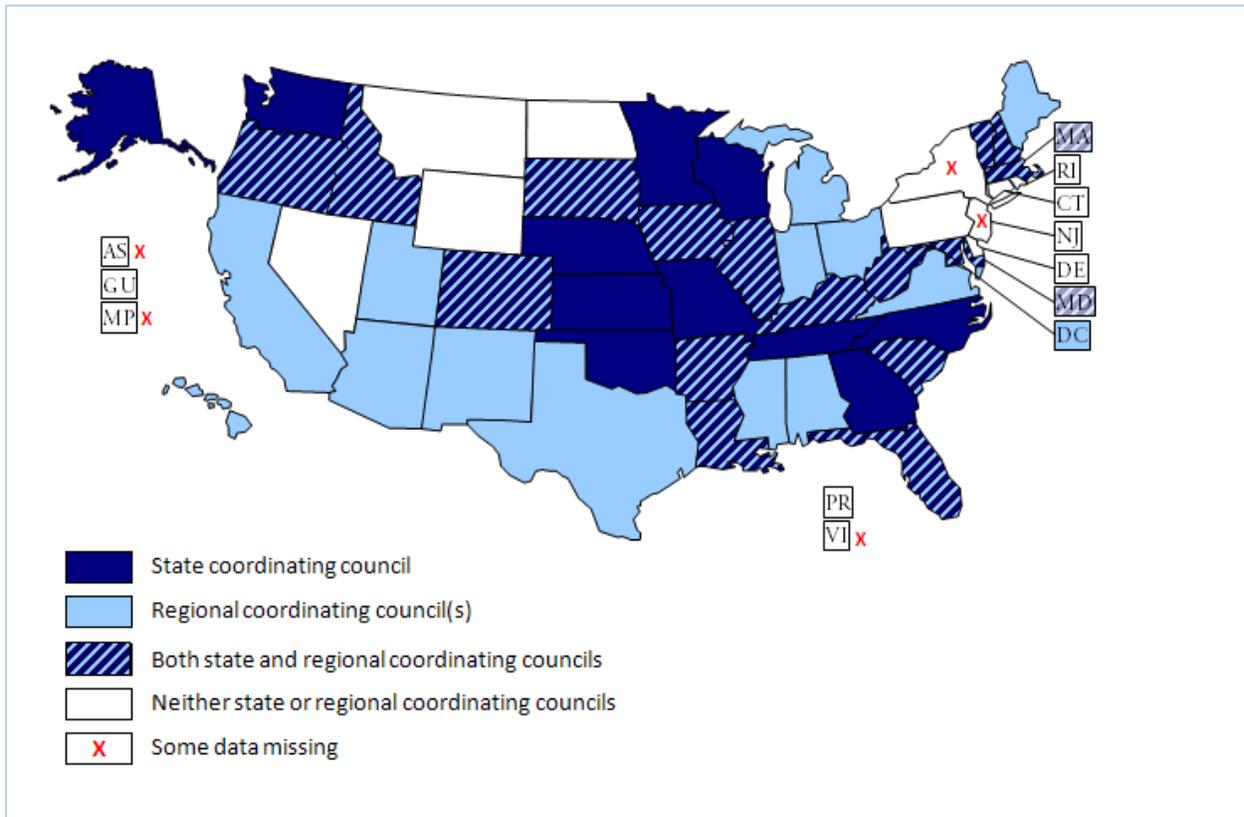
State and regional coordinating councils can have complementary roles to play in human service transportation coordination. Indeed, many states have incorporated multiple levels of coordinating councils as integral to their overall coordination strategy. As of Dec. 2011, 16 states reported having councils at both state and regional levels (Figure 3). Of the rest, 11 reported having only a state council; 13 and the District of Columbia reported having only regional councils; and eight states, Guam and Puerto Rico reported having neither state nor regional councils. (At least some data was missing for the remaining states and territories.)

¹² Federal Transit Administration, *New Freedom Program Guidance*.

¹³ National Cooperative Highway Research Program, *Research Results Digest 354*.

¹⁴ To further distinguish completion of these plans from regional coordinating councils, note that in some states such as Massachusetts, a state (not regional) entity such as the state department of transportation takes a central role in the planning process and is the primary recipient of funds from at least one of the three FTA-sponsored human service transportation programs. Source: Beverly Ward, United We Ride Regional Ambassador, personal communication, Dec. 13, 2011.

Figure 3. State and regional coordinating councils



A multi-level coordination strategy can offer several advantages. First, state and regional coordinating councils typically involve different stakeholders and can focus on the issues and tasks that best fit those members’ overall roles and responsibilities. Often, state councils include state agencies as core members and are better placed to address statewide policy. Regional and local councils, on the other hand, often include transportation providers and community organizations as core members and can better attend to service issues.¹⁵

STATE AND REGIONAL COORDINATING COUNCILS CAN PLAY COMPLEMENTARY ROLES IN HUMAN SERVICE TRANSPORTATION COORDINATION.

STATE COUNCILS MAY:

- Create an environment supportive of coordination through state policy and the regulatory framework
- Have state agencies as core members
- Ensure consistent statewide requirements

REGIONAL COUNCILS MAY:

- Focus on program implementation and service issues within the region
- Have transportation providers and community organizations as core members
- Take the unique needs of diverse regions into account

¹⁵ Suzanne O’Neill, Transit Plus, personal communication, Oct. 25, 2011.

In Colorado, for example, the state council focuses on creating an environment supportive of coordination, largely through changes to policy and the regulatory framework. In contrast, the state’s regional and local councils are responsible for implementing coordinated transportation programs, with their focus on the “operational and logistical aspects of coordinating resources and providing effective mobility.”¹⁶ The activities of the regional and local councils also include overseeing agencies that provide coordinated transportation in their respective areas.

A 2011 report by Georgia’s Governor’s Development Council and the state coordinating council also identifies the complementary roles of state and regional councils. It describes state-level strategies as direction or guidance that the state could take to ensure that coordination requirements are established and implemented consistently statewide. These could include developing streamlined and consistent reporting and program requirements, cost allocation methodologies and contracting processes across programs. In contrast, regional-level strategies could take into account the unique service needs of each region. The report—mandated by 2010 House Bill 277 to examine several areas for potential coordination improvements—recommends that Georgia adopt a bi-level structure that would include both the existing state council and the formation of regional-level councils, both staffed by mobility managers, saying, “This proposed coordinating infrastructure is similar to other states that are considered successes in [rural human service transportation] coordination.”¹⁷

As a further advantage, active communication among state and regional coordinating councils can help ensure that state activities are well connected to local needs. For example, one of the roles of regional and local councils in Colorado is to “provide feedback to the state council about what is working and what problems need to be addressed.”¹⁸ A state council may also be able to better coordinate an effective and efficient use of resources based on regional councils’ input. Conversely, regional councils can work to apply state guidance and recommendations to the distinctive, practical needs of a smaller geographic region.

CASE STUDIES

Regional coordinating councils vary widely, reflecting the state policy and programmatic environments in which they exist and the distinctive regional needs they are intended to address. This section provides case studies of regional coordinating councils that were created by state statute and by other initiatives.

¹⁶ The Colorado Interagency Coordinating Council for Transportation Access and Mobility, *Handbook for Creating Local Transportation Coordinating Councils in Colorado*, 2008, http://web1.ctaa.org/webmodules/webarticles/articlefiles/UnitedWeRideRegion8Handbook_20090217.pdf, 6; Nelson-Nygaard Consulting Associations, *Getting There Collaborative Analysis of Colorado’s Human Service and Public Transportation Networks*, 2005, <http://www.rcfdenver.org/reports/gtctransanalysis.pdf>.

¹⁷ Governor’s Development Council and the Georgia Coordinating Council for Rural and Human Services Transportation, *House Bill 277 Report: Coordinating Rural and Human Services Transportation in Georgia*, 2011, http://www.grta.org/rhst_home/docs/HB_277_Section%204%20RHST_Report_FINAL_web.pdf.

¹⁸ The Colorado Interagency Coordinating Council for Transportation Access and Mobility, *Handbook*, 6.

Statutorily Created Regional Coordinating Councils

Florida

Florida's well-established, multi-level coordination system is often cited as a successful example of human service transportation coordination.¹⁹ It has been recognized by the U.S. Department of Transportation and U.S. Department of Human Services as a “best practice” model, and has won awards from the FTA and the Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA).²⁰

Florida’s system is intended to balance local flexibility with comprehensive state planning, policy and oversight.²¹ The Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged (CTD), an independent state agency, serves as the policy development and implementation agency for Florida’s transportation disadvantaged program.²² The legislature created the Commission in 1989 (Fla. Stat. Ann. §§427.011 et seq.)²³ and made it responsible for the statewide coordination of transportation services for persons who are transportation disadvantaged, defined as those who “because of physical or mental disability, income status, or age are unable to transport themselves or to purchase transportation and are, therefore, dependent upon others” for transportation, or children who are “handicapped, high-risk or at-risk.”²⁴

The legislation clearly defines the roles of state, regional and local entities (Figure 4). The state Commission selects a metropolitan planning organization (MPO) or other local entity to be the designated official planning agency, which, in turn, appoints and staffs a local Coordinating Board, the chair of which must be an elected official. The Coordinating Board serves as an advisory body in its service area. It identifies local service needs, provides guidance for service coordination, and recommends a community transportation coordinator (CTC) to the state commission. The state commission contracts directly with the CTCs, which are responsible for coordinating transportation services in each county. As of Dec. 2011, 51 CTCs provide coordination for Florida's 67 counties; most CTCs cover one county, but several coordinate across county boundaries. CTCs receive state and federal funds and provide, contract for or

¹⁹ Also see the two reports produced by Georgia’s Governor’s Development Council for reporting year 2011, as mandated by 2010 House Bill 277. Both are online at http://www.grta.org/rhst_home/rhst_home.html.

²⁰ Bobby Jernigan, *Overview of the Florida Transportation Disadvantaged Program* (Tallahassee: Florida Commission of the Transportation Disadvantaged, 2010), <http://www.dot.state.fl.us/ctd/docs/TD%20Overview%202009.ppt>.

²¹ Matt Sundeen, James B. Reed and Melissa Savage, *Coordinated Human Service Transportation* (Denver: National Conference of State Legislatures, 2005), <http://www.ncsl.org/documents/transportation/item014232.pdf>.

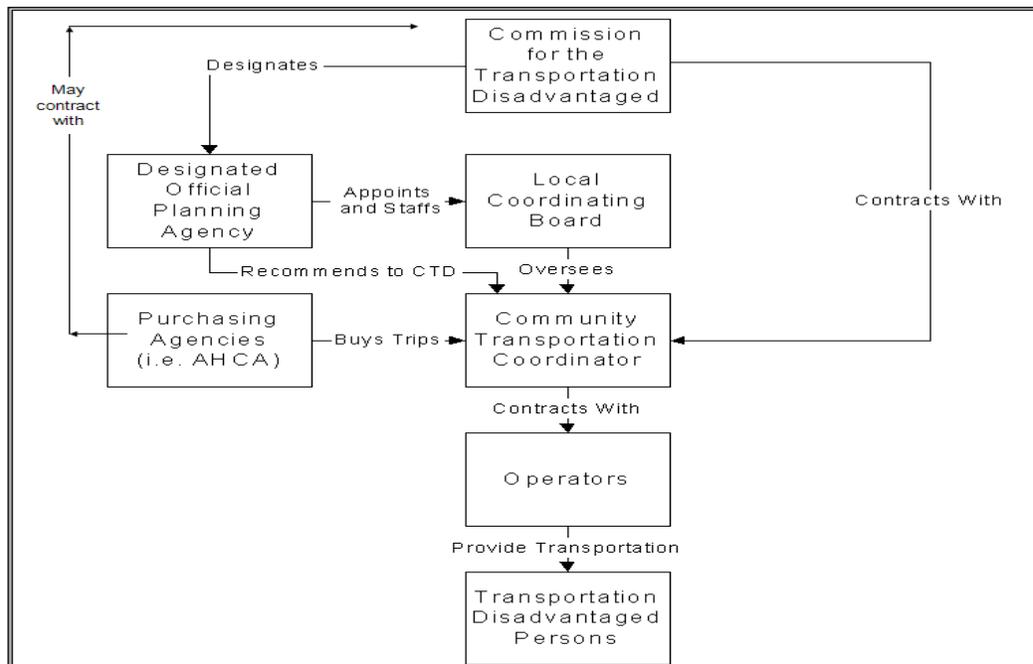
²² Jernigan, *Overview*.

²³ Florida's transportation disadvantaged program and the CTD are governed by Fla. Stat. Ann. §§427.011 et seq. and Rule 41-2, Florida Administrative Code. The Transportation Disadvantaged Trust Fund, which funds CTD activities, is established in Fla. Stat. Ann. §427.0159 and further outlined in Rules 41-2.013 and 41-2.014, Florida Administrative Code. For sources of revenue for the trust fund, see Fla. Stat. Ann. §320.02, §320.03, §320.0848, §320.204, §341.052 and §427.0159.

²⁴ Fla. Stat. Ann. §427.011(1).

broker transportation services. State agencies that fund transportation services (“purchasing agencies”) buy trips from a CTC or are billed directly by service operators.²⁵

Figure 4: Roles and relationships in Florida’s transportation disadvantaged system²⁶



Data for Florida’s system indicate significant economic and social benefits. As of 2008, for example, a Florida State University study found that each public dollar spent on transportation disadvantaged programs in the state was garnering a return on investment of \$8.35.²⁷ Further, the services are being used by the intended recipients. In FY 2010, 827,469 transportation disadvantaged persons statewide received more than 51 million trips. A reported 8.46 million of those trips were provided by the Transportation Disadvantaged Trust Fund, the state’s dedicated funding source for transportation disadvantaged services and coordination;²⁸ these trips would not otherwise have been covered by any other program.

California

In 1979, the California Legislature passed the Social Service Transportation Improvement Act, or SSTIA (Cal. Gov. Code §§15950 et seq.), to “improve transportation service required by social

²⁵ Jernigan, *Overview*; Sundeen, Reed and Savage, *Coordinated Human Service Transportation*; Fla. Stat. Ann. §§427.013 et seq.

²⁶ Jernigan, *Overview*.

²⁷ Dr. J. Joseph Cronin, Jr., et al., *Florida Transportation Disadvantaged Programs Return on Investment Study* (Tallahassee: Florida State University, 2008), http://tmi.cob.fsu.edu/roi_final_report_0308.pdf, 2.

²⁸ Florida Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged (CTD), *Florida Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged Annual Performance Report 2010* (Tallahassee: CTD, 2011), <http://www.dot.state.fl.us/ctd/programinfo/apraorcountypages.htm#2010%20Data>.

service recipients by promoting the consolidation of social service transportation services,”²⁹ while achieving cost savings and more efficient use of resources. The legislature intended transportation service providers to achieve cost efficiencies in six areas of consolidation: 1) combined purchasing of necessary equipment; 2) training drivers to lower insurance costs; 3) centralized dispatching; 4) centralized maintenance; 5) centralized administration of social service programs to eliminate duplication; and 6) identification and consolidation of existing funding for more effective and cost-efficient use of scarce resource dollars.

The SSTIA required regional transportation planning agencies and county transportation commissions to adopt action plans that described the needed steps to accomplish the consolidation of social service transportation services. Action plans were to initially designate a consolidated transportation service agency (CTSA) within the geographic area of jurisdiction of the transportation planning agency. If coordination improved, the regional agency was permitted to designate more than one CTSA.³⁰ According to the California Association for Coordinated Transportation, “Designation of CTSA’s and implementation of other aspects of the act were seen as a flexible mechanism to deal with the problem of inefficient and duplicative social service transportation programs that proliferated due to a dramatic increase in the number of social service programs offered by government agencies and private nonprofit organizations to meet their clients’ mobility needs.”³¹

California’s approach has had mixed success. There are now 50 CTSA’s; not all counties or geographic regions in the state, however, have designated CTSA’s. In addition, of those regions that have CTSA’s, only a few have been able to achieve some level of consolidation in all six areas identified in the law.³² The California Association for Coordinated Transportation has described the legislation as taking a “middle course between absolutely mandating and simply facilitating the coordination of transportation services;”³³ a 2005 report of the California State Transportation Task Team found that this “permissive rather than mandatory approach” was “not strong enough to mandate local action,” and resulted in CTSA’s in many jurisdictions being unable to overcome the political and funding barriers to full implementation.³⁴

An unpublished 2010 NCSL analysis of human service transportation coordination in California concluded that regional agencies and organizations were still in the early stages of determining the value and benefits of coordination, and that it would require substantial and sustained effort to build state and regional understanding, support and acceptance of coordination

²⁹ “Consolidation” is not synonymous with coordination, although they are similar. Consolidation brings all functions under control of a single entity, while coordination brings two or more agencies to work together on one or many functions. Although consolidation was the central concept in California’s legislation, over the years the entities established by the act have increasingly been thought of in broader coordination terms.

³⁰ Cal. Gov. Code §15975.

³¹ California Association for Coordinated Transportation, *CTSA eBook*, 2005, http://www2.calact.org/resources/ctsa_e-book/, 3.

³² California State Transportation Task Team, *Mobility Management Centers in California: A Position Paper of the California State Transportation Task Team*, 2005, http://www2.calact.org/resources/ctsa_e-book/Mobility%20Management%20Center%20Position%20Paper%20Final%20Version.doc, 3.

³³ California Association for Coordinated Transportation, *CTSA eBook*, 3.

³⁴ California State Transportation Task Team, *Mobility Management Centers in California*, 4.

principles and goals. The analysis outlined several strategies—as recommended by local, regional, state and federal stakeholders—to better support local and regional coordination efforts in the state. These recommendations included the development of informational resources for regional planning agencies about the value and benefits of establishing and funding CTSA; prioritization of CTSA projects for FTA funding as an incentive toward coordination; and the creation of a state coordinating council that could provide political support, structured guidance and information to local and regional agencies to encourage their progress towards coordination goals.³⁵

Non-Statutorily Created Regional Coordinating Councils

Idaho

Idaho’s state coordinating council—the Public Transportation Advisory Council and Interagency Working Group—was first established in 1992 in statute (Idaho Code §40-514).³⁶ The legislation was enacted as a result of a 1992 interim committee report demonstrating that public transportation in the state was then duplicative, fragmented and uncoordinated; the stated purpose of the bill was to “provide for a practical beginning in statewide coordination.” The original legislation also created six regional Advisory Committees to “advise and assist the council members in planning, resource identification, coordination and evaluation of regional and local transportation services.”³⁷ In 2000, however, the legislature eliminated the regional committees, saying, “the division now has access to local information through Regional Public Transportation Authorities, Local Transportation Committees and other groups interested in transportation issues that did not exist when the [1992] report was written.”³⁸ Regional efforts that are now active in Idaho have since developed through other, non-legislative initiatives.

Idaho’s local and regional coordination efforts now center on the state’s 17 Local Mobility Management Networks (LMMN). These networks were developed as part of a 2008 Idaho Transportation Department (ITD) paradigm shift towards comprehensive, person-centered mobility management, to help local stakeholders develop a structure and transparent process for mobility planning. LMMNs gather together individual citizens, advocacy groups, transportation providers, human services agencies and local leaders to coordinate and plan public transportation and mobility services based on meaningful service areas, rather than specific geographic boundaries.³⁹ Each LMMN generates an inventory of local services, identifies needs and develops a mobility plan to meet those needs.

³⁵ NCSL, *Caltrans Mobility Action Plan Strategic Implementation Plan*, 2010, unpublished.

³⁶ For more on Idaho’s Public Transportation Advisory Council and Interagency Working Group, see <http://itd.idaho.gov/publictransportation/ptac.htm> and <http://itd.idaho.gov/publictransportation/iwg1.htm> (both last accessed Dec. 14, 2011).

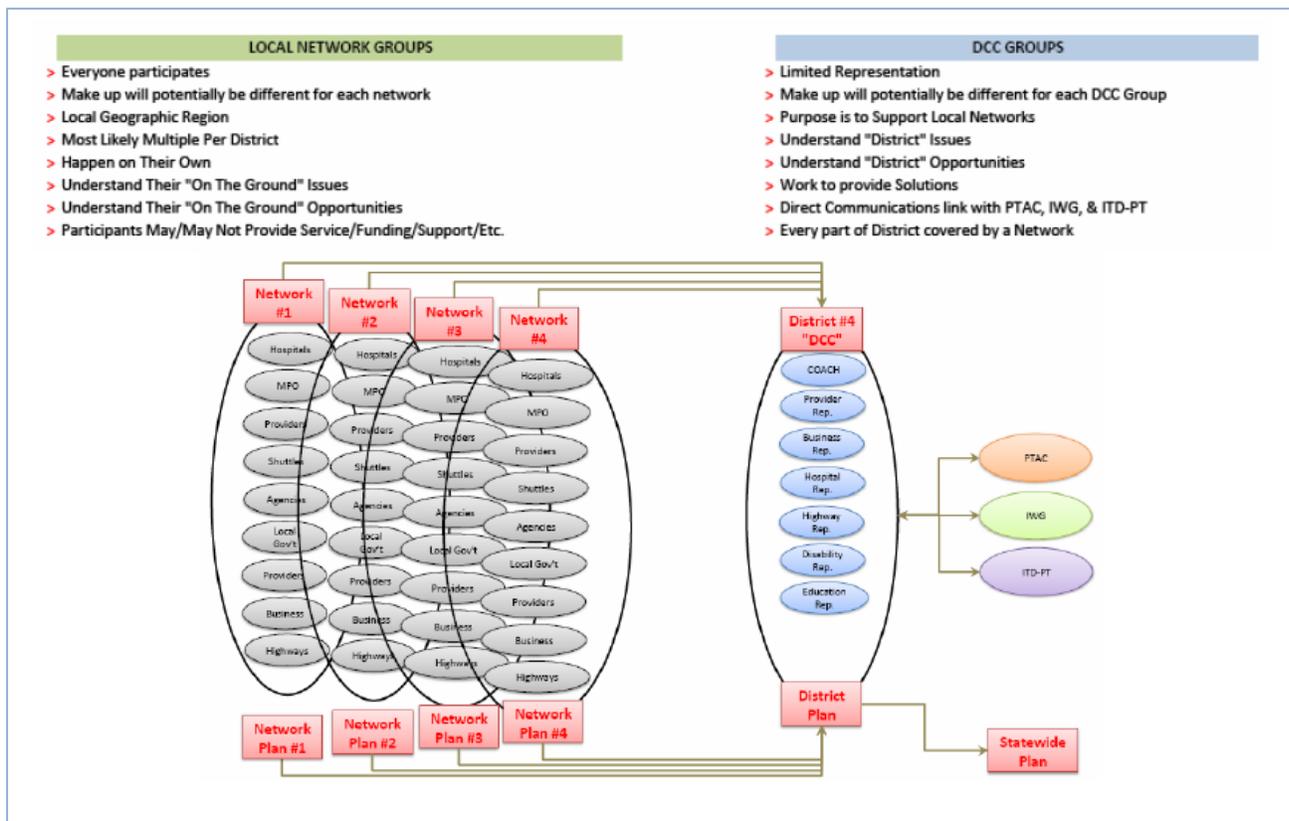
³⁷ 1992 Idaho Sess. Laws, Chap. 149 (H.B. 779).

³⁸ 2000 Idaho Sess. Laws, Chap. 417 (S.B. 1501).

³⁹ Lan Resources LLC, *Idaho’s Mobility and Access Pathway “IMAP” Inventory of Existing Services Project*, 2008, <http://www.lanresourcesllc.com/IMAP.html>; Idaho Transportation Department (ITD), *Idaho’s Mobility and Access Pathway: “IMAP:” A Mobility Management Focus Area*, 2008, <http://itd.idaho.gov/publictransportation/imap/imapfinal.pdf> (last accessed Dec. 14, 2011); various Idaho local mobility plans, all accessible at <http://i-way.org/Tool%20Box/documentlibrary>.

The 17 local networks combine into six district coordinating councils (DCCs), one in each of the state's six ITD districts (Figure 5). Each district council integrates the local mobility plans into a coordinated plan of the kind required for funding from FTA-sponsored human service transportation programs (see pages 7 and 8). The district councils in turn combine into a statewide network, coordinate with the state council and ultimately are meant to inform a statewide mobility plan. According to the ITD's 2008 re-visioning report that established the mobility network structure, *Idaho's Mobility and Access Pathway* (IMAP), "the process of aggregating those networks generates opportunities for coordination and connectivity, to be supported and developed at the most appropriate level."⁴⁰ The structure, though, assumes that coordination starts at the local level and is led by local efforts.⁴¹

Figure 5: Idaho's mobility network structure: local mobility management networks, district coordinating councils and state coordination entities⁴²



The ITD recently transferred the vision, management and oversight of the mobility planning and coordination program to the Community Transportation Association of Idaho (CTAI), a statewide nonprofit transportation and mobility association.⁴³ CTAI now employs six district

⁴⁰ Idaho Transportation Department (ITD), *Idaho's Mobility and Access Pathway*, 6.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Heather Wheeler, CTAI, personal communication, Jan. 3, 2012; see also Idaho's local mobility plans at <http://i-way.org/Tool%20Box/documentlibrary>.

mobility managers—one in each ITD district—to facilitate and support local mobility planning and coordination, public outreach, and implementation of the local and district mobility management network plans. The mobility managers also work to build partnerships with local officials and organizations to improve mobility options and resources. In addition, CTAI manages a Web site called I-way, which serves as a tool to improve stakeholder communication and coordination, provide mobility information to transportation providers and consumers, and create a multimodal network of connected travel throughout the state.⁴⁴

According to the 2008 ITD report, “Idaho’s population and mixed urban and rural environments do not make mobility less necessary; they make mobility more challenging and essential.”⁴⁵ Today, LMMN discussions in rural areas tend to focus on access to bicycle and walking paths and public transportation—whether fixed route, demand response, ride share, van pool, senior shuttle or another strategy appropriate to that community.⁴⁶

Colorado

Regional and local coordinating councils play an important role in Colorado, which is one of only 13 states in which human services programs are delivered at the county rather than at the state level.⁴⁷ Colorado has no statewide mandate for regional councils, but the state coordinating council—the Colorado Interagency Coordinating Council for Transportation Access and Mobility, created through a governor’s initiative in 2005—has identified the creation of a bi-level coordination framework, including the development of local and regional councils, as one of the state’s priorities.⁴⁸ According to the 2006 United We Ride strategic action plan for Colorado, “... both state and local coordination are critical to achieving a more efficient and effective human services transportation system that meets the needs of consumers across the state. Council members emphasized the importance of these two levels working together, understanding that Colorado has strong local control, is dependent on significant local funding, and must meet diverse needs across the state.”⁴⁹ So far, at least seven regional councils have been established in certain areas of the state through grassroots efforts and with state support.

One active regional coordination council in Colorado is the Denver Regional Mobility and Access Council, or DRMAC (pronounced “Doctor Mac”). DRMAC was formed in 2005 to address specialized transportation needs in the greater Denver metro area and to reduce barriers to mobility and access in the region by fostering inter-organizational collaboration.

⁴⁴ Community Transportation Association of Idaho (CTAI), *I-way*, <http://i-way.org/> (last accessed Dec. 14, 2011).

⁴⁵ Idaho Transportation Department (ITD), *Idaho’s Mobility and Access Pathway*, 7.

⁴⁶ Heather Wheeler, CTAI, personal communication, Jan. 3, 2012.

⁴⁷ The Colorado Interagency Coordinating Council for Transportation Access and Mobility, *Handbook*.

⁴⁸ Colorado Interagency Coordinating Council for Transportation Access and Mobility, *United We Ride Strategic Action Plan*, 2006, http://www.unitedweride.gov/Colorado_State_Action_Plan.pdf. Another recent effort by the state council to encourage regional and local coordinating efforts was the 2008 *Handbook for Creating Local Transportation Coordinating Councils in Colorado* (see note 16 for link).

⁴⁹ Colorado Interagency Coordinating Council for Transportation Access and Mobility, *United We Ride Strategic Action Plan*, 7.

DRMAC's model is unusual among regional coordinating councils. Most regional councils are housed within a government entity or council of governments, but DRMAC is a nonprofit organization and a project of the Colorado Nonprofit Development Center. Its nonprofit status allows it to facilitate independent workgroups on issues facing the transportation disadvantaged in the area. For instance, in partnership with the state council, DRMAC is currently overseeing the Colorado Veterans Transportation Task Force as well as the Denver Transit and Accessibility Task Force. As a nonprofit, the council also can advocate to local officials concerning policies and practices that affect transportation access and mobility.⁵⁰

DRMAC's primary role is as a facilitation body to "coordinate and bring together transportation providers and human services agencies to maximize efficiencies of scale, provide access to specialized transportation for each citizen who requires it and to improve the overall specialized transportation system."⁵¹ DRMAC now holds monthly meetings for a regional coordinating council of 50 organizational members, each of which has signed a memorandum of understanding in order to join. Members include state, city and county agencies; local coordinating councils; the American Cancer Society and American Red Cross; the Colorado Association of Transit Agencies; disability and veterans' organizations; senior organizations; nonprofit health care, social services and transportation providers; transit agencies; RouteMatch software; for-profit transportation providers; and citizen members.

To date, DRMAC has undertaken a wide range of coordination activities. It has issued a *Getting There Guide*—a guide to the region's transit options—in print, audio and electronic formats in both English and Spanish; developed TransitOptions, a searchable transportation database of local providers to facilitate connecting people with providers; conducted studies of transportation needs and services in the region; coordinated forums and training for volunteer driver programs and on other topics; published a volunteer driver best practices manual; and provided travel training, in partnership with Special Transit. With other regional stakeholders, DRMAC is also working towards creating a coordinated "one call, one ride" call center. DRMAC, however, is not the regional body responsible for completing the FTA-required coordination plan; this task is primarily completed by the Denver Regional Council of Governments, or DRCOG, although DRMAC does provide assistance.

Hybrid Models: Regional Councils Created in Response to Statutory Coordination Mandates

The case studies above have focused on states where regional coordinating councils were either specifically created in statute, or established by some other non-legislative initiative. In some states, however, a hybrid of these two approaches exists. Several state legislatures have enacted laws that generally mandate transportation coordination, without defining a specific structure for implementation. In some cases, regional coordinating efforts have then arisen in response to the statutory requirements. Iowa is profiled below as a state where regional coordinating councils were developed as a result of a broad statutory coordination mandate.

⁵⁰ Angela Schreffler, DRMAC, personal communication, Sept. 20, 2011.

⁵¹ Denver Regional Mobility and Access Council (DRMAC), *Welcome to the Denver Regional Mobility and Access Council*, <http://www.drmac-co.org/index.html> (last accessed Dec. 14, 2011).

Iowa

Iowa is a pioneer in human service transportation coordination. In 1976, the Iowa General Assembly adopted the nation's first coordination law, with a compliance review process added to the legislation in 1984.⁵² Iowa Code Ann. Chapter 324A requires any organization, state agency, political subdivision or transit system using public funds to provide transportation services—except public school transportation—to coordinate or consolidate funding and service with the urban or regional transit system in their area.⁵³ The statute further makes eligibility for federal, state or local funds for transportation services contingent upon compliance with the coordination mandate. The law does not, however, specify the structure or process by which such organizations must achieve coordination.

One response to the mandate was the creation of a state coordinating council, the Iowa Transportation Coordination Council (ITCC), which was officially established by administrative code in 1992 and expanded in 2001. The purpose of the ITCC, as stated in the code, is to “assist with implementation of the compliance reviews required by statute.”⁵⁴ The ITCC also works to encourage regional coordination among transit, health and human service agencies. In 2006, the council used United We Ride funding to sponsor 15 regional Mobility Action Planning Workshops around the state, largely to augment existing local and regional transportation coordination efforts. Many transit systems and planning agencies that attended these workshops subsequently formed regional coordinating councils called Transportation Advisory Groups (TAGs). TAGs guide the regional coordination planning efforts of the state's metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) and regional planning affiliations (RPAs) with support from the state department of transportation. They also identify service gaps and inefficiencies; propose solutions; prioritize projects based on available funding; and implement coordination and mobility management initiatives in their regions.⁵⁵ Iowa now has 21 TAGs that serve all of its 99 counties.

THE FUTURE OF REGIONAL COORDINATING COUNCILS

Regional councils can help coordinate the effective, efficient provision of transportation services to those who most need them, with a focus on addressing the service issues and needs of their unique regions. When working together with state councils, they can also ensure that state activities are connected to local needs. In recent years, more and more states have embraced regional coordinating councils as part of their overall human service transportation coordination strategy, as federal support for both state and local coordination has also grown.

⁵² Iowa DOT, *Iowa Transportation Coordination Council (ITCC): Background and Overview*, <http://www.iowadot.gov/transit/itcc/index.html>, last accessed Oct. 25, 2011.

⁵³ Iowa Code Ann. §324A.4.

⁵⁴ For more information about Iowa's state coordinating council, see NCSL's 2011 in-depth profile on this subject at <http://www.ncsl.org/?tabid=20357>.

⁵⁵ Des Moines Area Metropolitan Planning Organization, *Transportation Advisory Group*, <http://www.dmampo.org/committees/transit/tag.html>, last accessed Jan. 6, 2012; Iowa DOT Office of Public Transit, *Status of Coordination Planning in Iowa: Working Together to Improve Passenger Transportation Services*, n.d., http://www.iatransit.com/regulations/coordination/urw/statewide_mobility_action_plan.doc.

THE NUMBER OF STATES WITH REGIONAL COORDINATING COUNCILS IS GROWING. MANY OPPORTUNITIES REMAIN, HOWEVER, TO IMPROVE REGIONAL COORDINATION.

According to the Transit Cooperative Research Program, few states had specifically addressed regional coordination of services as of 2004, even though “coordination at the regional level is becoming an increasingly important issue as populations continue to disperse.”⁵⁶ By late 2011, however, 29 states had at least one regional coordinating council and 10 more had entities that had taken on some regional coordination work. In addition, as of Dec. 2011, Georgia, Oklahoma and Wyoming were exploring the option of creating more formally structured regional councils, beyond the existing regional efforts in those states.

Despite that progress, many opportunities remain to improve the regional coordination of transportation services for disadvantaged populations. Eight states, Guam and Puerto Rico have no coordinating councils at any level; many states have regional councils only in one or two areas in the state; and the councils that do exist have had varying success. In addition, many regional councils may be vulnerable to changes in organizational leadership, political support or funding. In 2004, the Transit Cooperative Research Program warned that “sustaining a coordination effort over the long term—especially after a local champion departs or a primary funding source is no longer available—can be a major challenge.”⁵⁷

Every coordinating council will be unique, but some factors that can contribute to the success of regional coordination—as reported by successful councils and best practices research⁵⁸—are:

- A broad base of community support—including support from elected officials—built by a reputation for effective and efficient service
- Clearly defined goals and objectives—often as part of a formal action plan with an accompanying timeline—that reflect a shared community vision
- Careful selection of coordination partners—including transportation providers and human service agencies—with the right decision-makers at the table at the right time
- Flexibility, including openness to new members and changing services; the ability to react to a loss of funding by shifting focus or restructuring operations; and responsiveness to changing community needs
- A formal legal or institutional framework for coordination, such as a state statute, county ordinance, written guidelines or other formal structure

⁵⁶ Transit Cooperative Research Program, *Strategies to Increase Coordination*, 15.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*; The Colorado Interagency Coordinating Council for Transportation Access and Mobility, *Handbook*; Dan Dirks, United We Ride Regional Ambassador, personal communication, Dec. 8, 2011; O’Neill and Ness, *Establishing Local and Regional Coordinating Councils*.

- Strong leadership, in some cases by a lead agency with the capacity, credibility and legal authority to effectively support the council’s activities
- Institutional commitment to coordination, rather than overreliance on one champion
- Available incentive grants or other financial support to help start coordination initiatives
- Taking the time and effort to build trusting relationships, address concerns and engage in ongoing communication among actual or potential coordination partners
- Active, regularly held council meetings
- An incremental or phased approach to implementing coordination
- Adequate research and data collection to identify needs and document successes, so the benefits of coordination are readily apparent
- Communication among councils at different levels of government
- Having an inventory of resources, programs and services in the council’s area of influence that identifies potential coordination options
- Real resource-sharing to avoid duplication of expensive program elements, and cost accounting and allocation systems that accurately reflect and fairly assign costs
- Focus on customers and making services as accessible and user-friendly as possible
- Building on early, small, concrete, short-term successes
- Interagency cooperation through referrals, information sharing, establishing uniform procedures for billing or reporting, and strategic use of resources

Coordinating transportation services has been called, “the best way to stretch scarce resources and improve mobility for everyone.”⁵⁹ As states are seeking options to leverage limited dollars while also effectively achieving their transportation policy goals, coordination offers a way both to improve transportation access and mobility—especially for individuals who may lack other options—and to yield significant economic benefits for the public sector.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Transit Cooperative Research Program, *Economic Benefits*, 2.

⁶⁰ In 2003, the TCRP estimated that implementing successful coordination programs could “generate combined economic impacts of about \$700 million per year to human service and transit agencies in the United States” through increased funding, decreased costs and increased productivity (see *Ibid.*, 1). It is unknown, however, whether the possible extent of these benefits might have been affected by the subsequent recession.

DIRECTORY OF REGIONAL HUMAN SERVICE TRANSPORTATION COORDINATING COUNCILS

The final component of this report—a comprehensive, state-by-state directory of regional coordinating councils in the United States, with contact information—is available as a separate document on NCSL’s Web site at <http://www.ncsl.org/?tabid=24055>.