



Special Needs Transportation Coordination Study

Final Draft Report
Joint Transportation Committee

December 3, 2008

Nelson|Nygaard
Consulting Associates



Presentation Overview

- I. Purpose and Methodology of Study
- II. Observations
- III. Recommendations



SHB 1694: Purpose of the Study

- Evaluate methods to improve transportation coordination for persons with special mobility needs
- Assess the role of ACCT (Agency Council on Coordinated Transportation)



Project Methodology

- Stakeholder Interviews
- Data Collection
- Four Stakeholder and Public Forums
- Four Case Studies in Washington
- National Best Practices Review



Key Observations



Observations

1. Special Needs Transportation Programs and Funding



Principal Sponsors of Special Needs Transportation

- Public Transit Agencies
- WSDOT: Community Transportation Programs
- Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS)
- Other State Human Service Agencies
- Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI)/Local School Districts



28 Public Transit Agencies

- Fixed route services provide many trips for special needs populations
- Systems have made accommodations for elderly, disabled
- Complementary paratransit services for eligible disabled persons
- For many, public transit is the best option



WSDOT Administers Consolidated State and Federal Grant Program

- Rural Mobility Grants
- Paratransit/other special needs grants
- Federal grant program for non-urbanized areas of the state



Department of Social and Health Services

- Medicaid program is major sponsor of special needs transportation
- Provides medically-related trips for eligible (low-income) persons through brokered arrangement
- Other DSHS agencies also separately purchase or provide transportation



Other State Agencies

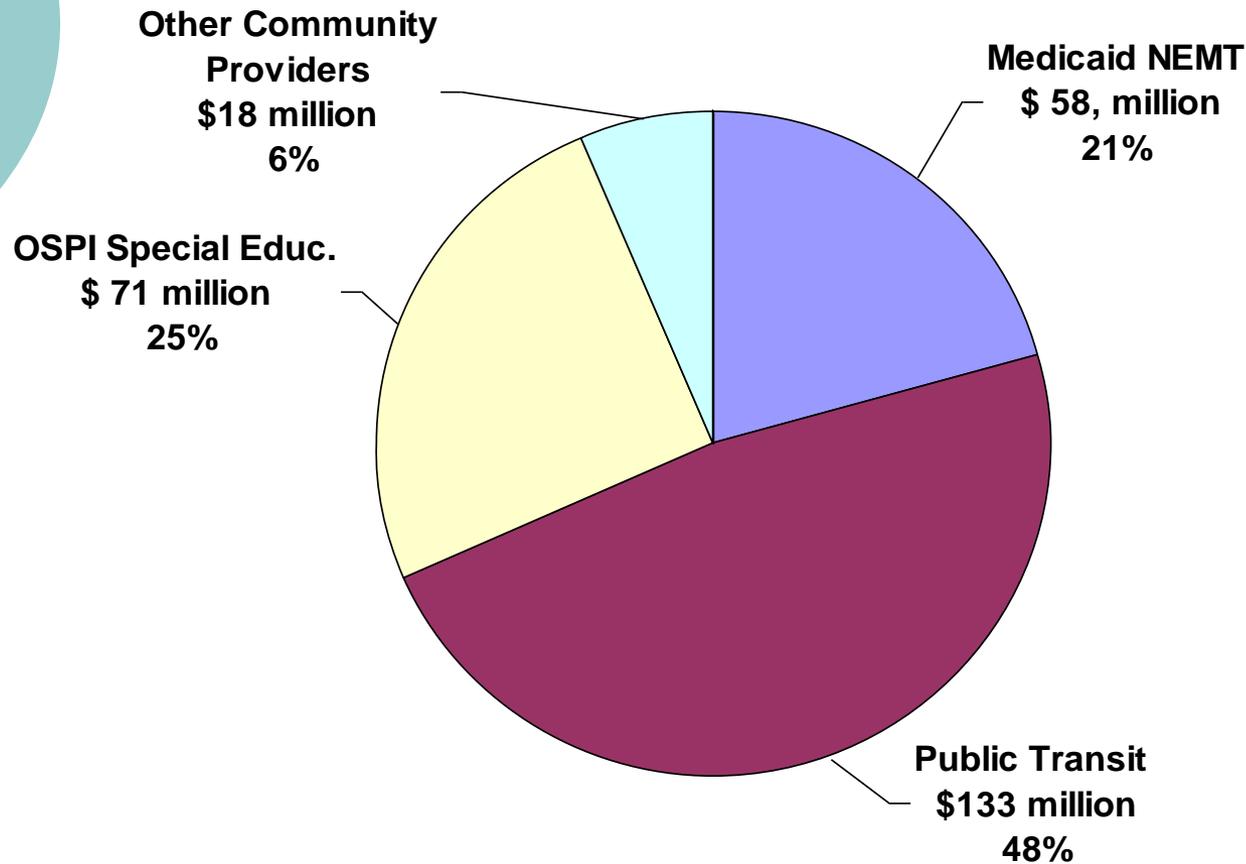
- Other agencies purchase or sponsor transportation with state funds
- Most do not track expenditures or keep records to quantify service
- Transportation often viewed as “auxiliary” service



Pupil Transportation: OSPI

- Over \$300 million annually spent on basic (non-specialized) transportation
- Special program (special education, services for homeless students) account for about \$70 million annually
- Transportation costs covered 2/3 by State and 1/3 by local funds
- Special program allocations growing at a faster rate than basic program allocations

Specialized Transportation Funding Snapshot: **\$280 million**



FY 2005



Observations

2. Status of Transportation Coordination in Washington State



Coordination: What's working well?

- Federal planning requirements (SAFETEA-LU) engaged human service and transportation partners at the local level
- Many active local coordination councils
- Versatile brokerage infrastructure
- Coordination with Tribes
- Innovation through pilot projects
- Trend toward more regional, corridor based services



Challenges from Customer's Perspective

- Confusing and inconsistent eligibility standards for various programs
- (Often) no clearinghouse to find out about options
- Travel across county lines is difficult and time consuming, especially if a transfer is involved
- Social service personnel don't always know full range of mobility options



Opportunities to Improve Coordination

- **Lack of statewide policies** to define and enforce coordination
- **Largest sponsors do not blend funds** and operate separately

Results in:

- confusion for customer
- potential for duplication and redundancy



Barriers to Coordination

- Funding restrictions prevent or hinder blending agencies' funds
- Developing equitable cost-sharing methodology can be complicated
- Incompatible vehicle requirements (especially with school buses)
- Client databases are not shared due to privacy issues



Coordination Barriers, cont.

- Different driver requirements
- Inconsistent planning and reporting requirements for transportation and human service agencies
- Unique customer needs don't always allow for grouping passengers
- Contract or labor union restrictions sometimes limit flexibility



Observations

3. Best Practices



Best Practices from Other States

- Coordination practices from Florida, Iowa, North Carolina, and Ohio studied
- Focus on statewide coordination councils, organization of local coordination efforts, and coordination with Medicaid programs
- ACCESS Program (Pittsburgh, PA)



Lessons Learned

- Coordination needs formal bi-level structure at state and local/regional levels
- Needs a broad-based coalition and political champions at both levels
- DOT and DHS share common goals
- Councils must have “teeth” – control over policies and funding
- Local coordination difficult to plan/implement without seed funding and technical assistance



Recommendations



Recommendations Overview

9 areas of findings and recommendations:

- 3 areas related to structure
- 6 areas related to funding and other issues



Recommendations

1. Clarify ACCT's Role as Statewide Oversight Body



Finding: ACCT's Role

- There is not a well established relationship between ACCT and local councils
- ACCT members want to be more pro-active, but lack the tools and authority to do so
- DOT required to chair and staff ACCT— prevents opportunity to cultivate leadership role from others

ACCT's Role, con't

- Not a clear understanding by stakeholders of its mission
- Not empowered with meaningful oversight of coordination at the statewide level
- Not provided with adequate staffing or budget to fulfill its potential
- Most think ACCT should continue, at minimum, as a forum to encourage discussion and information sharing

Recommendations: Clarify ACCT's role as Statewide Oversight Body

- Designate ACCT as Statewide Oversight Body with regulatory authority to set policy direction and provide oversight of statewide coordination efforts
- Develop Bi-Level Structure to complement local coordination efforts (Recommendation 2)
 - 1 (a) Amend ACCT bylaws to clarify tasks and responsibilities

Recommendations: Clarify ACCT's Role as Statewide Oversight Body

- 1 (b) Re-assess ACCT membership to ensure special needs constituencies are adequately represented
- 1 (c) Diversify ACCT leadership to allow for agencies other than WSDOT to chair
- 1 (d) Re-Locate ACCT to promote independence and autonomy
- 1 (e) Provide adequate funding, including contributions from participating agencies other than WSDOT



Recommendations

2. Establish Local Coordinating Boards and Community Access Managers



Finding: Bi-Level Coordination Structure is Needed

- Coordination best implemented at local level
- No “one-size fits all”--flexibility is needed to recognize unique local circumstances
- Recognize and build upon current system strengths

Recommendation: Establish bi-level coordination in Washington State

Authorize ACCT to

- Create or Appoint Local Coordination Boards
 - Appoint existing coordination councils where applicable
- Contract with Community Access Managers



Role of Local Coordinating Board

- Recommends selection of Community Access Manager (CAM)
- Monitors performance of CAM
- Promotes coordination and acts as clearinghouse within region
- Conducts special needs transportation planning; sets local priorities

Role of Community Access Managers (CAMs)

Organizations responsible for coordination of providers in a local service area:

- Operate one-call center to provide information on mobility options
- Contract with variety of local service providers
- Provide services under contract for participating agencies, according to agency specifications
- Assign client trips to the most appropriate provider
- Manage a volunteer program
- Maintain program records and report on progress

How Should Community Access Manager be Selected?

- Competitive Procurement Process (Request for Proposal)
- Process administered by ACCT
- Purchasing agencies specifications included in RFP
- CAM recommended by Local Coordinating board
- ACCT to contract with CAM

How Should Regions be Defined?

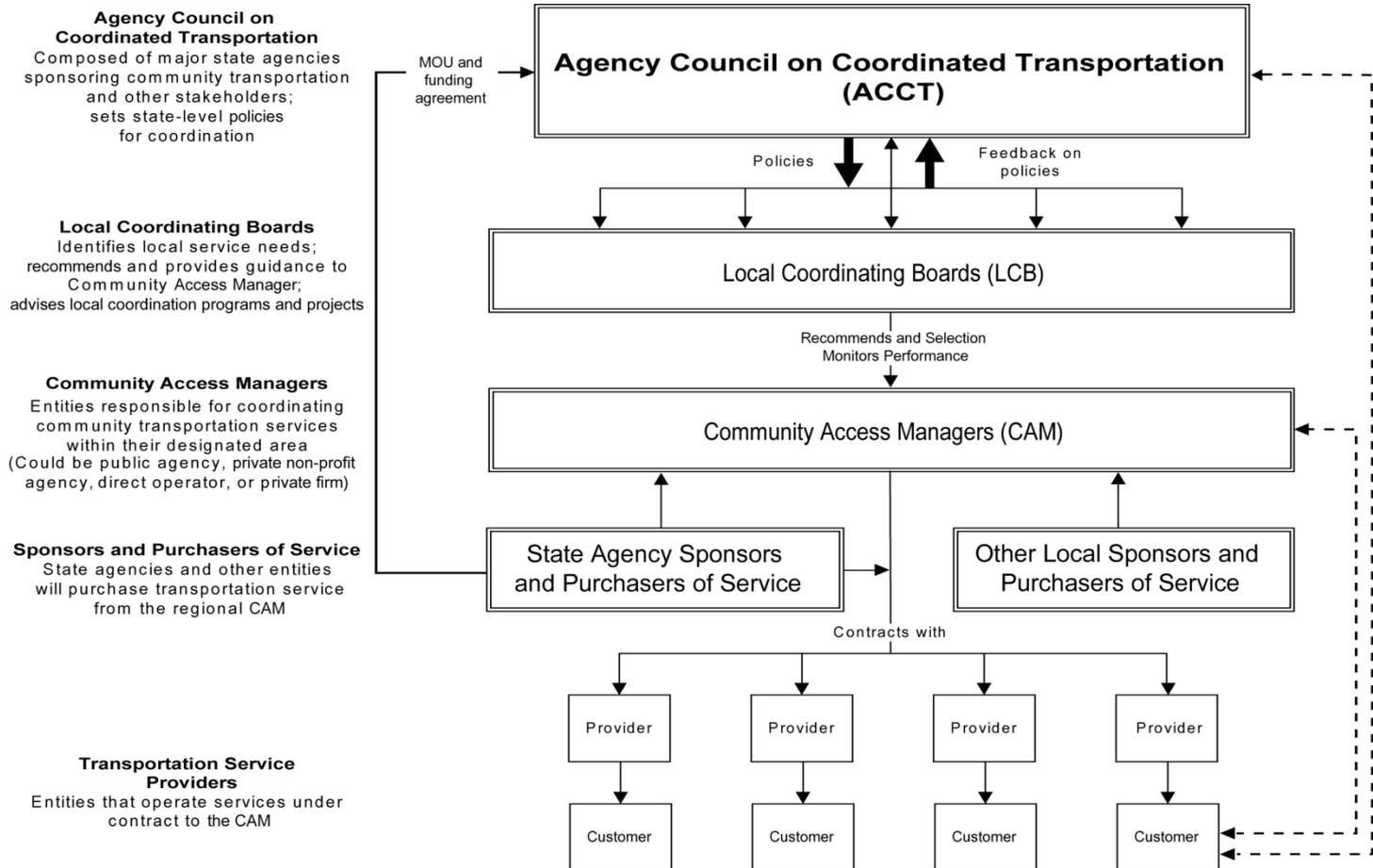
Options examined:

- Current Medicaid Regions
 - Current DSHS Regions
 - Regional Transportation Planning Regions
 - 2-1-1 Regions
-
- Recommendation: Current Medicaid Regions

13 Medicaid Regions



Proposed Community Transportation Services Organizational Chart



Recommendation: Establish bi-level coordination in Washington State

- 2 (a) Use Medicaid service areas when defining regions
- 2 (b) Select CAMs through competitive procurement process
- 2 (c) Incorporate purchasing agencies' specifications in RFP
- 2 (d) Direct ACCT to conduct or delegate procurement process
- 2 (e) Authorize ACCT to contract with CAMs



Recommendations

3. Promote Coordination of Medicaid and Public Paratransit Programs



Findings: Medicaid and Public Paratransit Programs

- Two largest sponsors of special needs transportation operate separately
- Good faith efforts to test coordination should continue
- Presents greatest opportunity for coordination

Recommendation: Promote Coordination of Medicaid and Public Paratransit Programs

- 3 (a) Sponsor Pilot Programs to:
 - Demonstrate cost-sharing of Paratransit and Medicaid NEMT trips
 - Track value of un-reimbursed Medicaid trips provided by public transit operators, and explore feasibility of using as match to federal Medicaid funds



Recommendations: Promote Coordination of Medicaid and Paratransit Programs

- 3 (b) Certify transit operators as Medicaid providers
- 3 (c) Encourage transit operators to purchase service from Community Access Managers
- 3 (d) Explore feasibility of expanding Medicaid program beyond medical trips



Recommendations

4. Establish Uniform Definitions and Reporting Requirements



Finding: Reporting and Definitions

- Inconsistent definitions and methods for budgeting, reporting and evaluating special needs transportation is a barrier to coordination



Recommendations: Uniform Definitions and Reporting

- 4 (a) ACCT to establish common service definitions
- 4 (b) Require ACCT members and CAMs to use common definitions
- 4 (c) Develop uniformity in performance and cost reporting
- 4 (d) Establish a clearinghouse for driver background checks



Recommendations

5. Provide Adequate Funding to Support Coordination



Finding: Funding Needs

- ACCT is underfunded and cannot carry out its potential mission without adequate funding
- Seed money—as well as ongoing financial support—needed for Local Coordination Councils
- WSDOT controls state and federal funds which could be tied to coordination requirements

Recommendations: Provide Adequate Funding

- 5 (a) Require all state and local agencies that purchase special needs transportation contribute to ACCT
- 5 (b) Prioritize use of federal SAFETEA-LU funds for mobility management purposes to help support local coordination councils
- 5 (c) WSDOT to tie use of funds it oversees to advance coordination effort
- 5 (d) Require any state agency purchasing transportation to execute an MOU with ACCT and purchase directly through the Community Transportation Program



Recommendations

6. Improve Service Connectivity for Customers



Finding: Customers Confused by Disjointed System

- Many people need to travel beyond their immediate community to access specialized services
- Often, interjurisdictional travel is difficult, time consuming and inconvenient
- Transit systems do not always coordinate schedules, fares, or have convenient transfer sites

Recommendations: Improve Service Connectivity

- 6 (a) Identify transit “hubs” and develop a connectivity plan for each
- 6 (b) Identify and adopt connectivity standards
- 6 (c) Develop, test and implement technology that can promote connectivity
- 6 (d) Eliminate artificial barriers that force transfers
- 6 (e) Institute corridor service where justified by demand



Recommendations

7. Influence Facility Siting Process

Finding: Facilities often not “transit friendly”

- Considering proximity to public transportation when making decisions on facility siting is often an after thought.
- Public transit providers are often asked after the fact to provide service to new facilities



Opportunities to Influence Facility Siting

- Public sector facilities: Siting guided by state policies and procedures
- Private state licensed/funded facilities: Site review is part of licensing and funding processes
- Other private human services providers: Siting guided by local zoning code



Recommendations to Influence Facility Siting Practices

- 7 (a) Take accessibility into account as an operating cost when comparing potential sites
- 7 (b) Locate sites near a “cluster” of clients to ensure efficient service provision
- 7 (c) Provide state and local incentives for private sector facilities to locate near transit
- 7 (d) Review access to transit for all private sector human services facilities

Influence Facility Siting Practices, con't.

- 7 (e) Review preferred location with transit provider before purchase/lease finalized
- 7 (f) Provide more specific language defining “access to transit” in siting guidelines for state facilities
- 7 (g) Make “access to transit” (defined) an eligibility guideline for state licenses and funds
- 7 (h) Evaluate parking requirements for housing developments serving senior and low-income residents, and for Transit Oriented Developments (TODs)



Recommendations

8. Enhance Coordination with Pupil Transportation



Finding: Challenges with Pupil Transportation

- There are limited opportunities to integrate pupil and public transportation systems
- Providing transportation for homeless students is challenging, and a significant cost for school districts
- Provisions already exist that allow for coordination with pupil resources (buses), but are rarely implemented



Recommendations: Enhance Coordination with Pupil Transportation

- 8 (a) Evaluate a wider use of community brokers to provide transportation for homeless students
- 8 (b) Direct OSPI to require local districts to track their expenditures for homeless students
- 8 (c) Evaluate the use of capital resources (school buses) when they are not being used for school purposes



Recommendations

9. Seek to Influence Federal Planning and Program Requirements

Finding: Federal Planning and Program Opportunities

Many special needs transportation programs are defined by federal laws and regulations:

- Medicaid
- Americans with Disabilities Act
- Older Americans Act
- McKinney-Vento Act
- SAFETEA-LU
 - Section 5311, Rural Transportation
 - Section 5311 (c), Tribal Transportation



Recommendations: Influencing Federal Planning and Program Requirements

- 9 (a) Include comparable planning requirements for human service agencies as established for use of public transit funds authorized in SAFETEA-LU
- 9 (b) Advocate for funding to support transportation programs required through the McKinney Vento Act
- 9 (c) Support federal legislation that would increase the reimbursement rate authorized for volunteers
- 9 (d) Expand funding programs to be subject to Coordinated Public Transit Human Services Transportation Plans



Keys to Success

- Development of detailed implementation plan
- DSHS role is crucial to advance new approach
- Legislation needed to:
 - Clarify ACCT's role
 - Require bi-level coordination infrastructure
 - Direct state agencies to purchase transportation through community program and contribute to ACCT

Public Review and Comment: November 19-December 2

- 8 comments received
 - One transit agency
 - Four individuals
 - Community Transportation Association of America NW
 - Paratransit Services, on behalf of current Medicaid brokers
 - Pierce County Coordinated Transportation Coalition



Comments Received:

- Requests for clarification or technical corrections
- Requests for elaboration on certain key points or recommendations
- Responses (support or opposition) to recommendations



Support Expressed:

- Stronger role and continuation of ACCT
- Improved connectivity for customers
- Uniform methods of reporting
- State agencies other than Medicaid participating in brokerage
- Coordination of Medicaid and public transit services
 - Pilots needed
 - Development of software needed
 - DSHS support needed



Concerns Expressed:

- Establishing local coordinating boards and community access managers
 - Could be disruptive and displace current brokers
 - May result in duplication or additional layers of bureaucracy
 - May result in “super broker” by consolidating programs

Concerns Expressed:

- Agencies other than WSDOT should financially support ACCT
 - Unclear how agencies would benefit
 - Funds should not be taken from services to support administration
 - What is equitable “formula” to determine contributions?



Next Steps:

- Discussion
- Refine Report
 - Technical and Clarifying
 - Policy Group Direction
- Final report, January 2009