

Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan for Los Angeles County

Summary of Policy

The purpose of the Coordinated Plan is to allow LACMTA to fulfill its responsibilities as the Designated Recipient of FTA Section 5316 (JARC) and Section 5317 (NF) funds for Los Angeles County; thereby enabling the agency to certify that the projects to be selected for funding were derived from a locally developed and adopted coordinated public transit- human services transportation plan ("the Coordinated Plan").

As the Designated Recipient for federal JARC and NF funding for Los Angeles County, LACMTA is responsible for conducting a competitive selection process for available funding and awarding grants to sub-recipients. It must also certify that the selection process employed has resulted in a fair and equitable distribution of funds and that the projects selected for funding were derived from a locally developed Coordinated Plan.

The Coordinated Plan is prepared in response to the coordinated planning requirements of SAFETEA-LU (Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Act -A Legacy for Users, P.L. 190-059), set forth in three sections of the Act: Section 5316-Job Access and Reverse Commute, Section 5317-New Freedom Program and Section 5310-Elderly Individuals and Individuals with Disabilities Program.

The Coordinated Plan establishes a comprehensive strategy for transportation service delivery in Los Angeles County focused on unmet transportation needs of elderly individuals, persons with disabilities and individuals of low income. The

coordinated plan must contain the following four (4) required elements:

- An assessment of available services identifying current providers (public and private);
- An assessment of transportation needs for individuals with disabilities, older adults, and people with low incomes -this assessment can be based on the experiences and perceptions of the planning partners or on data collection efforts and gaps in service;
- Strategies and/or activities and/or projects to address the identified gaps between current services and needs, as well as opportunities to improve efficiencies in service delivery;
- Priorities for implementation based on resources (from multiple program sources), time, and feasibility for implementing specific strategies and/or activities identified.

Priorities relative to the development and funding of coordinated transportation projects identified through the locally developed comprehensive unified plan should:

1. Adequately address the unmet/underserved and individualized transportation needs of the targeted populations;
2. Maintain consistency with current Federal and State funding regulations and requirements;
3. Be financially sustainable;
4. Include measurable goals and objectives, largely developed by the applicants;
5. Build and/or increase overall system capacity and service quality; and
6. Leverage and maximize existing transportation funding and capital

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resources, including human services funding.

A vision is proposed for Los Angeles County's locally developed plan: Improved Community Mobility for Los Angeles County Seniors, Persons with Disabilities and Persons of Low Income.

To this end, four (4) goals were developed supported by sixteen (16) implementing objectives to accomplish coordination in the county. In addition, a total of forty-two (42) implementing actions, strategies or projects are recommended. The goals, objectives, implementing actions or strategies and recommended projects are presented below and outlined in Chapter 8 of the full plan document, specifically in Table 8-2. The goals are responsive to the Federal guidance for the locally developed plan and establish the roadmap by which mobility needs of the Los Angeles County target populations can be addressed. The implementing strategies are the methods by which gaps in services and opportunities for improved efficiencies may be effectuated, through various coordinated initiatives. The four goals and the potential projects suggested follow.

Goal 1 – Coordination Infrastructure

Given the level and diversity of needs in the county, a regional approach to facilitating coordination is needed, as no one agency or organization has the resources to effectuate the necessary cultural, institutional and operational changes needed to accomplish coordination goals. Coordination in Los Angeles County cannot be accomplished without dedicated staff and financial resources. Projects funded under this goal

should establish and/or further the development of a mobility manager concept, to be implemented at a regional level, sub-regionally and at agency levels. This includes:

FUNDING CATEGORY: COORDINATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Projects submitted under this category should generally:

1. Establish a Regional Mobility Management capability to provide leadership on coordination of specialized transportation within Los Angeles County.
2. Conceptualize tools to support voluntary, agency-level mobility manager capabilities and recruit human services and public transit agency participation.
3. Develop visibility around specialized transportation issues and needs, encouraging high level political and agency leadership.

Goal 2 – Building Capacity

Acknowledging that more transportation capacity is needed to meet the needs of a growing population within Los Angeles County, this goal proposes more trip options for the target populations. This goal inherently requires a strengthening of the ability of human service agencies to provide trips that public transit cannot, thereby increasing not only capacity but access to services. The notions of reliability, quality of service and service monitoring are reflected under this goal, important for both public transit and human service agency transportation providers. Projects and activities under this category could involve the following:

FUNDING CATEGORY: BUILDING CAPACITY

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Projects submitted under this category should generally:

1. Promote policies to increase the quantity of public transit and specialized transportation provided.
2. Improve the quality of public and specialized transportation, with attention to meeting individualized needs.
3. Improve transportation solutions between cities and between counties.
4. Make capital improvements to support safe, comfortable, efficient rides for the target populations.
5. Establish mechanisms to support transportation services provided by human services agencies.
6. Establishing procedures to measure the quantities of trips provided, existing and new.

Goal 3 – Information Portals

The need to broaden the reach of information related to transit and specialized transportation services for clients/consumers, as well as stakeholder agencies and organizations is critical. Los Angeles County has a wealth of transportation service resources. Points of access to transportation information must be expanded to make it easier for everyone to understand and use the transportation network. Activities proposed under this goal include:

FUNDING CATEGORY: INFORMATION PORTALS

Projects submitted under this category should generally:

1. Integration and promotion of existing information strategies, including 211, web-based tools and Access Services

RideInfo to help get public transit and specialized transportation information to consumers.

2. Development of information portal tools for wide distribution of existing information.
3. Promoting opportunities to disseminate transportation information for human services agency line staff and workers.

Goal 4 – Coordination Policies

There is a need to effectuate changes to governmental policies and practice that may discourage coordination -at local, regional, state and federal levels for the purpose of realizing coordination goals between the two systems. For example, there is a continuing effort to challenge and potentially change Medi-Cal reimbursement policies at the state level. Other policies will need to be identified and addressed over time, in part through measurement of the success, failure and impacts of implemented projects. Activities developed under this goal may include:

FUNDING CATEGORY: COORDINATION POLICIES

Projects submitted under this category should generally:

1. Work to establish non-emergency medical transportation policies to more cost-effectively meet medically-related trip needs.
2. Establish processes by which implemented projects are evaluated against goals set by applicant agencies.
3. Report on project successes and impacts at direct service levels, sub-regional levels and countywide levels and promote project success at state

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and federal levels.

4. Review policies related to transportation of target population members between counties where the policies are a deterrent to transporting individuals to medical facilities within a reasonable distance of county borders.

This plan proposes the enhancement and improvement of the existing network of services through coordination --specifically for seniors, persons with disabilities and persons of low income. A coordination vision is proposed of improved mobility for the target populations.

To accomplish this vision, several dozen implementing actions and strategies have been detailed in the body of the report with the expectation that there will be incremental implementation and refinement of actions and strategies over the next few years. The strategies outlined should be viewed as guidance for public transit and human service agencies, as actual projects developed by stakeholders will be based upon their specific needs, resources and ability and willingness to work to establish coordination relationships with others.

Historical Perspective

By resolution dated May 25, 2006, the Board of Directors authorized the agency to be the Designated Recipient of federal JARC and NF formula funds. The Board also authorized the Chief Executive Officer to select projects, program funding, and file and execute FTA grant applications, agreements, and contracts on behalf of LACMTA to fulfill its responsibilities as the Designated Recipient. LACMTA must certify that the selection process resulted

in a fair and equitable distribution of funds and that the projects selected for funding were derived from a locally developed, coordinated public transit-human services transportation plan.

Under the existing MOU between LACMTA and Access Services, Incorporated (ASI), ASI is responsible for updating its service inventory and Action Plan to comply with the California Social Services Transportation Improvement Act. Consequently, ASI expanded the scope of the recently completed 2006-2007 Action Plan Update to comply with the SAFETEA-LU requirements for developing a coordinated plan focused on the unmet transportation needs of elderly, disabled, and low-income individuals. Consistent with the FTA's program requirements, ASI developed the Action Plan, which was used as the basis for the included Coordinated Plan.

The Plan was developed through a process that involved representatives of the public, and private and non-profit transportation and human services providers. The Los Angeles County Coordinated Plan has been developed according to FTA requirements, and it identifies those needs that can be addressed with FTA Section 5310-Elderly Persons and Persons with Disabilities, Section 5316-JARC, and Section 5317-NF program funding.

The planning process involved quantitative analyses, including a demand estimation to gauge need and an inventory survey of countywide stakeholders to identify resources, needs and potential partners. Qualitative activities included public meetings and interviews with major agencies and organizations funding human services, with a representative group of direct

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service providers, and with representatives of the target group constituencies.

A critical element of the plan development approach was the Strategic Planning Committee. This group was formed from an invitee list of almost fifty organizations, including transit operators, elected officials, Federal Transit Administration officials, neighboring county representatives, and human services organizations serving Los Angeles County constituencies.

A census-based estimate of demand was undertaken to identify the Los Angeles County target population and their potential trip demand.

Trip demand was estimated for the target population. Average trips per day were estimated, as well as, the proportion of public transit trips.

A total of 208 inventory surveys were returned from an extensive, countywide stakeholder listing, reflecting a 5.4 percent response rate. Although below a typical response rate of 7 to 15 percent for such surveys, respondents were nonetheless representative of the type and breadth of agencies and organizations in Los Angeles County involved with transportation to the target populations.

Inventory respondents were reasonably distributed among the five Metro sectors with the greatest number (31 percent) from the Westside/Central areas and the fewest from the South Bay (14 percent) and Gateway Cities (13 percent) respectively. Respondents' legal characteristics included: 48 percent private, non-profit agencies; 33 percent public agencies, 15 percent private for-

profit agencies and four percent faith-based organizations. Key findings from the stakeholder survey included:

- Medical trips ranked as the number one trip need by the human services organizations and long-trips, beyond the local community, ranked as the number one trip need by the public transit agencies. These are often the same type of trip, as medical trips generally require medium to longer distance travel, with medical destinations frequently outside jurisdictional boundaries and not served by locally oriented transportation providers.
- The most frequently noted barrier to coordination was the "mixing" of clients and consumers on transportation services. This issue is reported by agencies and organizations in other settings and presents challenges, especially in operating environments where vehicle resources are limited and where the profile of the client/customer base is varied, such as dialysis patients, adult day health care consumers and low-income children attending daycare. Another common barrier was uncertainty about with whom to coordinate where agencies indicated potential willingness to coordinate but no clarity as to with whom to do so.
- Significant numbers of agencies indicated interest in coordination, while slightly over one-third of respondents indicated they were "not interested in coordination." Among the coordination topics with the largest supporting groups were:
 - Coordinated trip scheduling and dispatch -21 percent

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- Contracting with other agencies to provide trips -15 percent
 - Coordinated vehicle/capital purchases -15 percent
 - Pooling or sharing of vehicles - 14 percent
 - Joint purchase of equipment, supplies, insurance -13 percent
 - Shared fueling, maintenance, storage facilities -12 percent
- Public transit operators, for the most part, have predictable and stable funding sources, which include Federal, State, and local sources. Human services organizations report high levels of dependency upon donations and fees, with limited on-going funding. Surveyed human services agencies reported that more than half of their transportation funding (53 percent) goes to bus pass and token purchases.

The stakeholder involvement effort included meetings and interviews with stakeholders, termed "appropriate planning partners" by the FTA. This included management and staff representatives of human services agencies and organizations, clients and consumers, public transit staff, and other governmental personnel. Key findings were characterized in terms of: 1) transportation needs; 2) barriers to coordination; and 3) suggestions for potential coordination projects. This process allowed considerable participation by stakeholders in the coordination "dialogue" and incorporation of significant stakeholder input into the plan.

The unique and individualized needs reported and expressed through the

inventory and stakeholder involvement processes were significant. These were discussed in two dimensions. First, in relation to consumer-oriented characteristics of need, including those of frail and able-bodied seniors, persons with a variety of disability-types, and low income individuals, including families and homeless persons. Secondly, organizationally-oriented characteristics of need include the trip types needed, the importance of on-time performance, transit pass and bus token issues, expanded hours and days of service, information needs, and bus facility requirements of safe transfer locations and bus shelter amenities, including bathrooms. Gaps in service were characterized as follows:

- Institutional Communication Gaps exist, contributing to the difficulties of working between two very distinct service systems. For public transit, operating transportation services are its core business, around which significant infrastructure has been built. For human services agencies, transportation is a support service and often viewed as a distraction from agencies' primary purposes.
- Service Capacity is an issue where certain trip needs of the target populations are not being met, despite a significant Los Angeles County network of public transportation.
- Meeting Individualized Needs remains a critical characteristic of the unmet specialized transportation need of this region. Providing service to those difficult-to-serve groups or difficult-to-meet trips are the challenges of this planning effort.
- Improving Performance of Demand

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Response Services is critical to consumers and their agency and organization representatives, as are issues related to service quality. These include addressing on-time performance, late pick-ups, late arrivals, too-long travel times and no-show vehicles. Reliability of para-transit services is an important issue where problems can translate into critical situations for frail, vulnerable and dependent populations.

- Improving Communication between Drivers, Dispatchers and Passengers is critical to improving the capability of services to address consumers' mobility needs. This includes expanding transit's ability to meet the diverse language needs of Los Angeles' populations, evident particularly among frail elderly persons who do not speak English.
- Non-emergency Medical Trips and Inter-Community Medical Trips surfaced as the consistently difficult-to-meet trip type needed across all groups. This is exacerbated in California by state-level policy related to Medical reimbursement and in Los Angeles particularly where medically-oriented trips are typically long trips to distant regional facilities.

The myriad of individualized needs emerging through discussions with agency representatives and with consumers helped develop project needs. Projects are discussed in relation to the type of consumer, as with senior transportation, or the types of trips needed, as with non-emergency medical transportation, or the types of transportation improvements necessary to effectively serve members of the target populations.

Staff will continue updating this plan and will come back to the Board for adoption of a revised version as appropriate.

Last Board Action

January 24, 2008 – Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan for Los Angeles County

Board approved on Consent Calendar adoption of the Coordinated Public Transit-Human Service Transportation Plan for Los Angeles County.

Attachments

[Coordinated Plan for Los Angeles County](#)

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