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PREPARING COORDINATED TRANSPORTATION PLANS: A GUIDEBOOK FOR STATE DEPARTMENTS OF TRANSPORTATION

This digest presents the results of NCHRP Project 20-65, Task 14, "Current Practice and Future Guidance on the Development of SAFETEA-LU-Required Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plans." The research was conducted by TranSystems under contract to AECOM Consult, with Patricia Monahan as the Principal Investigator.

SUMMARY

In August 2005, authorization for the federal transportation program was renewed in the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU). Among the many changes to federal programs included in SAFETEA-LU is the requirement for a "locally developed, coordinated public transit-human services transportation plan." Projects supported by Elderly Individuals and Individuals with Disabilities (Section 5310), Job Access and Reverse Commute (Section 5316, or JARC), and New Freedom (Section 5317) funds beginning in FFY 2007 are required to be derived from such a plan.

Plans must identify current transportation providers and services, discuss the transportation needs of the relevant target populations, identify strategies to address those needs, and establish implementation priorities among projects and activities. Outreach efforts must be made to encourage the participation of human service and transportation providers and representatives of the target populations. Coordinated plans must be adopted by an entity that is determined locally. Finally, the projects that will

receive Section 5316 or Section 5317 funding must be selected through a competitive process.

The objectives of this research were to identify state Departments of Transportation (DOTs) that have already designed coordinated planning processes to meet the Federal Transit Administration's (FTA's) requirements, and generate information about key aspects of those processes that will be useful to other state DOTs and their planning partners as they develop or revise their own planning processes. Tasks included a review of FTA's requirements for development of a coordinated public transit-human services transportation plan as the foundation for projects funded through the Section 5310, 5316, and 5317 grant programs; a survey of state DOTs, planning organizations, and transit agencies to learn about current efforts to prepare local coordination plans; and the preparation of mini-case studies to highlight different approaches and best practices.

This Guidebook presents a summary of how the coordinated planning requirements have been implemented in a number of states and describes the efforts of the case study states in more detail. Approaches and

practices that have been used successfully are presented for the consideration of other state DOTs.

The Guidebook is organized as follows. Chapter 2 reviews the federal requirements for the development of coordinated plans. Chapter 3 summarizes the current coordinated planning practices employed by state DOTs, based on the results of the online survey and the mini-case studies. Chapter 4 presents alternative approaches and best practices related to each step of the coordinated planning process. A variety of sample materials from state DOTs and other resources are attached in the Appendixes.

Overview of Current Practice

There are several different roles that a state DOT may play in the development of coordinated plans. The designated recipient of funds from the Section 5310, 5316, and 5317 programs must ensure that projects and services that receive funding from those programs are derived from a coordinated plan. State DOTs are the designated recipients of 5310 program funds for their state, and are typically, but not always, the designated recipient for JARC and New Freedom funds that are apportioned to small urban and non-urbanized areas. While the designated recipient must pay attention to coordinated plans when making funding decisions, some other entity may be responsible for the actual preparation of the coordinated plan(s).

The online survey of state DOTs conducted in July 2008 requested information about coordinated plans that the DOT is directly responsible for preparing, plans that cover funds that are typically apportioned to states that are prepared by entities other than the DOT, and the DOT's role in the coordinated plans being developed for large urbanized areas.

Twenty-seven states and the District of Columbia responded to the survey; an additional state provided basic information about its planning efforts via e-mail. The survey results offer a qualitative look at the SAFETEA-LU coordinated planning requirements from the perspective of state DOTs.

Key points about current practices among state DOTs as they develop coordinated plans include the following:

- Between 86% and 95% of the state DOTs that responded to the survey are designated recip-

ients for funds from one of the three grant programs covered by the coordinated planning requirements (the percentage varies by funding source). Only half of the state DOTs that responded to the survey are directly responsible for preparing a coordinated plan.

- Seventy-five percent of the state DOTs that responded to the survey and have direct responsibility for preparing a coordinated plan have completed a plan for FFY 2007; 42% were in the process of preparing a plan for FFY 2008 at the time of the survey.
- Other entities that are responsible for preparing a coordinated plan for funds that are administered by the state DOT include Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) and regional planning organizations, counties and municipalities, and local transportation providers and human services agencies.
- A number of responding state DOTs have embraced the planning requirements and established ongoing statewide or regional planning groups or networks to develop the coordinated plans. Coordinated planning in those states continues to evolve and mature.
- Several states have provided robust technical assistance and support to enable other entities to develop coordinated plans.
- Respondents utilized approaches to data collection/analysis, involvement of stakeholders, and outreach activities that were suggested in FTA's *Federal Register* guidance and the coordinated planning chapters of the revised Section 5310, JARC, and New Freedom program circulars. Few additional approaches were reported by responding DOTs.
- Sixty-five percent of responding state DOTs are also involved in the coordinated planning activities in large urbanized areas, and are playing a variety of roles, most notably providing policy direction or guidance, serving on advisory or stakeholder committees, providing funding to support the efforts, and supplying planning process materials or templates.
- Staff time constraints, the level of effort needed to meet the planning requirements relative to the amount of funding available from the three grant programs, and convincing stakeholders to participate in the planning process were among the top challenges noted by state DOTs responding to the survey.

- Some state DOTs are seeking information, resources, and answers pertaining to transportation coordination and the technology that can be used to facilitate it for use in their future planning activities.

Elements of the Coordinated Planning Process: Alternative Approaches and Best Practices

Survey responses and interviews with case study DOTs revealed alternative approaches to each step of the coordinated planning process and a number of recommended practices, which are summarized below.

Organize the Planning Process

As a result of the flexibility that states have with regard to designating recipients for funds from the three sources and assigning responsibility for developing coordinated plans, state DOTs face a number of decisions when designing the process that will be used to comply with the SAFETEA-LU requirements. Questions to be answered include what entity will be the designated recipient for the JARC and New Freedom funds for small urban and non-urbanized areas, whether a statewide or individual regional/local plans will be developed, how will “local” be defined, and what entities will play the lead role in planning activities.

Survey responses indicated several different approaches to structuring the planning process. The experiences of the case study DOTs suggest the following as useful practices:

- Take advantage of existing resources and capabilities, and build on a base of previous planning efforts if possible when designing a coordinated planning process.
- Consider developing a structure that can be used for planning efforts beyond the preparation of coordinated plans.
- Consider enlisting the aid of a technical or advisory committee as the planning process is designed, implemented, monitored, and modified.
- Once established, provide materials such as answers to FAQs, PowerPoint presentations, and planning process overviews, to explain the state’s coordinated planning requirements

and federal and state transportation grant programs to local entities and stakeholders.

- Use planning organizations either as lead agencies or in a more technical, advisory role.
- Clearly communicate that coordinated plans are intended to be meaningful local documents.
- Evaluate the results of the planning process, and revise as necessary.

Determine the Plan Contents

State DOTs have exercised their flexibility with regard to coordinated plan contents, aside from the required items, and the degree of detail that is provided. Sample tables of contents from the plans developed in several states are included in the Guidebook’s appendixes.

A number of states provide sample plan outlines and/or sample plans to regional or local groups that are charged with preparing coordinated plans. Such examples are useful to local planning groups as they work through the planning process and help to achieve consistency among the plans prepared throughout a state. Flexibility for the regional/local groups is important, however, so that local plans reflect local circumstances and preferences.

More detailed descriptions of plan contents and suggested ways to develop required or recommended sections are another useful tool for those responsible for preparing coordinated plans.

Identify Stakeholders

In response to the list of stakeholders suggested in FTA’s coordinated planning guidance and the grant program circulars, a broad and inclusive group of stakeholders was involved in the development of the coordinated plans of DOTs responding to the online survey.

DOTs and their planning partners have found several particularly useful approaches to identifying the specific organizations and agencies in a community or region that need to be invited to join the planning process, and for encouraging their participation. They include the following:

- Make the identification of stakeholders an action item for regional or local planning groups.
- Start with existing advisory groups or stakeholders that participate in other transportation planning activities.

- Include new partners who can bring local knowledge and contacts to the planning process.
- Offer varying levels of involvement to potential stakeholders in order to increase the chances that they will choose to participate in the planning process and broaden the stakeholder base.
- Provide lists of contact information to regional/local planning groups.
- Work with coordination councils or committees at the state level.

Conduct Outreach Activities

The most frequently used approaches among state DOT survey respondents to informing stakeholders about the coordinated planning process and encouraging their participation included: community planning sessions to identify needs, strategies, and priorities; invitation letters; e-mail lists; the United We Ride *Framework for Action* assessment tool; mail surveys; focus groups; other self-assessment tools; newspaper and/or radio ads; website notices; in-person surveys; e-mail surveys; and notices or flyers in community centers.

Other recommended activities include the following:

- Provide technical assistance and outreach materials to local/regional planning groups. DOTs can assist regional or local coordinated planners by providing sample materials to use in their outreach efforts, and/or guidance related to involving stakeholders in planning efforts.
- Offer training for entities responsible for developing coordinated plans so that they are able to work with stakeholders more effectively.
- Use special coordination summits or forums to generate interest in the coordinated planning process on the part of non-traditional stakeholders.
- The United We Ride *Framework for Action: Building the Fully Coordinated Transportation System* is an effective tool for engaging stakeholders for whom transportation coordination may be a new concept.
- Involving elected officials as stakeholders or endorsers of the planning effort can encourage other stakeholders to participate and increase the chances of successful local funding requests.

Document Existing Transportation Services

State DOTs and their planning partners have used a number of methods to collect information about existing transportation services and providers, a required element of the coordinated plans.

Surveys of transportation providers were the most widely used method of collecting information by the DOTs providing information about their data collection efforts in the online survey. Some state DOTs have developed a survey questionnaire for use by local or regional coordinated planning groups. Others have outlined the types of information that should be assembled in materials that provide an overview or guide to the planning process for planning partners.

Other popular methods of data collection included planning workshops or forums and surveys of human services agencies, surveys of users and other stakeholders and Internet research. Alternative sources of information that can help to fill in some of the blanks include service inventories developed as part of other plans or studies and recent Section 5310 or JARC grant applications.

Creative means of distributing surveys or collecting information, such as using local community groups to hand out questionnaires, inserting surveys into utility bills, or offering a prize such as a restaurant gift certificate to survey respondents may also be effective. Making surveys available in languages other than English, where applicable, is another way to improve response rates.

Identify Service Gaps and Unmet Needs

The majority of the state DOTs that responded to the online survey reported using analysis of demographic data, analysis of available transportation services, and Geographic Information System (GIS) tools to identify needs and service gaps. Surveys, planning workshops or forums, focus groups and other stakeholder outreach methods also yielded more qualitative information about service needs or other transportation barriers faced by the target populations, such as problems with accessibility or affordability of service.

The U.S. Census is an obvious source for demographic data, but local planning groups may not know where to find it or how to use it to support their coordinated plans without assistance. A Census data “primer” that outlines step-by-step procedures for

obtaining and analyzing demographic data from the Census website is attached in the Guidebook's appendixes. This primer, or a similar guide, could be distributed to local planning groups by state DOTs.

Another approach is to rely on planning agencies to provide technical assistance to regional or local groups. A state DOT may find it useful to summarize relevant data at the regional level and provide it to local groups.

GIS mapping is a particularly valuable tool for identifying and displaying service gaps. Items that are more informative when displayed on a map include the number, percentage, and density of target populations and popular activity centers or common trip destinations for those groups. Overlaying bus and rail routes, rail stations, and demand response service areas on a map that includes target populations and activity centers can show spatial service gaps very effectively. Transit routes that are coded to indicate days and hours of service can illustrate temporal gaps.

Develop Strategies to Address Gaps and Needs

Following the identification of the service gaps and unmet needs faced by the target populations, coordinated plan developers must formulate strategies, activities, and/or projects to address those needs and gaps and increase the efficiency of transportation services.

Whether coordinated plans include strategies, projects, activities, or some combination is a local decision.

Two alternative approaches are the following:

- The coordinated plan identifies strategies that have been determined to be priorities in each planning region, the unmet needs or issues that they address, and potential projects that would help to implement the strategy.
- The coordinated plan prepared by a community identifies strategies for addressing needs and includes a prioritized list of projects for which the community intends to seek funding. Information about projects, their priorities, and the strategy they are linked to is requested in funding applications.

Lessons from the case study sites included the following:

- The difference between a strategy and a project or proposed service may not be apparent to

local planning groups. The DOT may want to include in its planning guidance to communities examples of strategies and sample projects that can help to achieve the strategy.

- The difference between a strategy and a need may not be clear to local planning groups. Local plans may express needs that incorporate strategies for addressing them, by identifying a need for a particular type or mode of service in a specific area or for a specific type of trip, for example. Plans can be improved by clearly stating needs, identifying general strategies that can address those needs, and translating those strategies into specific projects.
- Members of the target populations may be faced with other types of gaps in addition to temporal or spatial gaps in the transportation system, such as a lack of information about available transportation options, gaps due to restrictions on eligible individuals or types of trips, or on service parameters such as the level of assistance provided to passengers. Other gaps may result from issues that restrict travel options or affect the quality of a passenger's travel, such as lack of fixed route amenities, lack of accessible taxi service, aging vehicles, high rates of driver turnover, and insufficient numbers of volunteer drivers.
- Include a range of strategies in the coordinated plan to increase the potential for successfully addressing service gaps, and utilizing available funding sources. Local planning groups may show a tendency to propose new or expanded traditional fixed route or demand response services as the only way to address unmet needs, and overlook alternatives such as use of volunteer drivers, consolidation of services among transportation providers, or taxi subsidy programs.
- Consider physical accessibility projects, in addition to new or improved services, as a way to expand travel options.
- Capital improvement projects and the deployment of technology systems to improve efficiency or facilitate coordination could also be part of a range of strategies.

Prioritize Strategies

FTA requires coordinated plans to establish priorities among strategies, activities, and projects

on the basis of time, resources, and feasibility of implementation.

Some states prioritize strategies or projects when the plan is prepared. In other states, prioritization happens during the competitive selection process. Priorities among projects are first established at the regional level, and funding recommendations are made to the DOT or a state oversight committee by the regional planning groups. The state-level agencies also apply prioritization criteria before final funding decisions are made.

Design and Administer Competitive Selection Process

Projects that receive funding from the JARC or New Freedom programs must not only be derived from a local coordinated plan, but must also be chosen through a fair and equitable competitive selection process. As with other elements of the planning process, state DOTs have a number of alternatives with regard to the selection process and its administration, and have the flexibility to design a process that best meets local needs and preferences.

Among the DOTs that provided information about their competitive selection processes, the process is conducted by either the DOT, an MPO, the DOT in concert with an MPO, another planning organization, or local stakeholders using criteria developed by the DOT and agreed to by the stakeholders.

In a third of the responding states, the competitive selection process is used to solicit projects/recipients throughout the state. In 22% of the states, the selection process is conducted for regions within the state; in another 22%, projects/recipients are solicited in the state's non-urbanized areas. In one state (11% of respondents), the process is used to select projects/recipients in all of the state's small urban areas.

DOTs described how their Section 5310 selection process has been or will be coordinated with the JARC and/or New Freedom selection processes. Common approaches include joint application processes, similar or identical selection criteria, consideration of the extent to which the applicant coordinates with other transportation providers, or ways in which a project funded by one source can complement or bolster projects funded by another. States are also using strategies such as allocating a portion of Section 5310 and state funds to MPOs in coordinated planning regions to use on projects of their choice,

and allowing purchase of service and use of vouchers across programs.

Case study DOTs offered the following additional suggestions for coordinating between the Section 5310 programs and the other two funding programs:

- Incorporate coordinated planning activities into Section 5310 selection criteria.
- Use information in coordinated plans about gaps, needs, and priorities to establish project selection criteria or priorities for the Section 5310 program.

Coordinate with Other Planning Processes

Coordination efforts between the coordinated planning process and existing statewide and metropolitan transportation planning processes can be summarized as follows:

- MPOs and regional planning commissions were invited to participate in coordinated planning meetings and forums.
- MPOs and other planning organizations provided data for the coordinated plans.
- MPOs and other planning organizations reviewed coordinated plans.
- Identical timelines are used for preparing coordinated plans and other transportation plans.
- Projects identified in coordinated plans are included in Transportation Improvement Programs (TIPs) and Statewide Transportation Improvement Programs (STIPs).
- Coordinated plans will be included as components of other long-range transportation plans.

Update Coordinated Plan

FTA's final guidance, as transmitted in the Coordinated Planning chapters of the revised program circulars for the Section 5310, JARC, and New Freedom programs (issued in May 2007), notes that coordinated plans should be updated in concert with the schedules for metropolitan transportation plans, at a minimum. This means every 4 years in air quality nonattainment and maintenance areas, and every 5 years in air quality attainment areas. The coordinated plan cycle in a particular state or community may be shorter, so that it coincides with the competitive selection process, for example,

which may be conducted annually, or up to every 3 years.

State DOTs that responded to the online survey shared their anticipated plan update cycles. The majority indicated that they will update plans every 2 years, or completely update plans every 4 to 5 years, but encourage regional or local planning groups to revise the plans more frequently to incorporate new information, address new service gaps or needs, or include new projects.

A number of states, having developed coordinated plans for FY 2007, have undertaken or are embarking on an update for FY 2008 or FY 2009. The first round of planning appears to have been a learning experience, and states anticipate modifications to the planning process or planning activities to make enhancements such as the following:

- Broaden the scope of plans in response to a new coordination administrative order executed by the state's governor.
- Emphasize different types of transportation services among proposed strategies.
- Provide a plan template for communities to follow.
- Turn more planning responsibility over to large urbanized areas.
- Develop a more robust needs assessment process.
- Improve the process for prioritizing projects.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

In August 2005, authorization for the federal transportation programs was renewed in the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU). Among the many changes to federal programs included in SAFETEA-LU is the requirement for a “locally developed, coordinated public transit-human services transportation plan.” Projects supported by Elderly Individuals and Individuals with Disabilities (Section 5310), Job Access and Reverse Commute (Section 5316, or JARC) and New Freedom (Section 5317) funds beginning in federal FY 2007 are required to be derived from such a plan.

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) published final guidance for the FY 2007 coordinated plans in the *Federal Register* in September 2006, and in the revised Section 5310, Section 5316, and Section 5317 program circulars issued in May 2007.

Minimum requirements for the contents of coordinated plans, planning partners and outreach efforts, and the planning process were established in the guidance. Despite these requirements, the guidance for the development of coordinated plans features flexibility—FTA recommends that the planning process, plan contents, and other elements be tailored to the needs and resources of each state/region/local area, and that the coordinated plans build on existing plans, studies, advisory groups, and coordination activities. In addition, FTA has determined that several key decisions regarding the coordinated plan process are to be made at the state, regional, and local levels. The state Departments of Transportation (DOTs) are key parties to these decisions, together with regional and local agencies and organizations.

The objectives of this research were to identify state DOTs that have already designed coordinated planning processes to meet FTA's requirements, and generate information about key aspects of those processes that will be useful to other state DOTs and their planning partners as they develop or revise their own planning processes. Tasks included a review of FTA's requirements for development of a coordinated public transit-human services transportation plan as the foundation for projects funded through the Section 5310, 5316, and 5317 grant programs; a survey of state DOTs, planning organizations, and transit agencies to learn about current efforts to prepare local coordination plans; and the preparation of mini-case studies to highlight different approaches and best practices.

This Guidebook presents a summary of how the coordinated planning requirements have been implemented in a number of states and describes the efforts of the case study states in more detail. Approaches and practices that have been used successfully are presented for the consideration of other state DOTs.

The Guidebook is organized as follows. Chapter 2 reviews the federal requirements for the development of coordinated plans. Chapter 3 summarizes the current coordinated planning practices employed by state DOTs, based on the results of the online survey and the mini-case studies. Chapter 4 presents alternative approaches and best practices related to each step of the coordinated planning process. A variety of sample materials from state DOTs and other resources can be found in the appendixes, which are posted online at http://trb.org/news/blurp_detail.asp?id=10134.

CHAPTER 2 COORDINATED PLANNING REQUIREMENTS

This chapter summarizes the requirements for a local coordinated public transit-human services transportation plan established by SAFETEA-LU for projects to be funded under the Section 5310, Section 5316 (JARC), and Section 5317 (New Freedom) programs.

2.1 Coordinated Planning Requirements

As noted earlier, FTA issued draft guidance regarding the FY 2007 implementation of the Section 5310, 5316, and 5317 programs and development of the local coordinated plans. The draft guidance was published in the *Federal Register* for public review and comment in March 2006 (1). (The *Federal Register* notice also included guidance pertaining to use of funds for the three programs in FY 2006.) After compiling public comments, FTA published final guidance for the FY 2007 coordinated plans in the *Federal Register* in September 2006 (2). In that notice, draft circulars for the Section 5310, 5316 and 5317 programs, which contain identical coordinated planning sections, were also discussed. Notice of the final program circulars was published on March 29, 2007 (3), and the circulars, containing the final requirements for coordinated planning, took effect on May 1, 2007 (4, 5, 6).

Minimum requirements for the contents of coordinated plans, planning partners and outreach efforts, and the planning process are established in the guidance and program circulars. Plans must identify current transportation providers and services, discuss the transportation needs of the relevant target populations, identify strategies to address those needs, and establish implementation priorities among projects and activities. Outreach efforts must be made to encourage the participation of human services and transportation providers and representatives of the target populations. The plan must be adopted by an entity that is determined locally. Finally, the projects that will receive Section 5316 or 5317 funding must be selected through a competitive process.

2.1.1 Plan Contents

At a minimum, coordinated plans must include the following elements:

- Identification of current transportation providers and services, including public, private, and non-profit providers;
- Assessment of the transportation needs of older adults, persons with disabilities, and individuals with low incomes, as appropriate;
- Identification of strategies, activities, and/or projects to address those needs and transportation service gaps and increase the efficiency of transportation services; and
- Implementation of priorities among strategies or activities, based on time, resources, and feasibility.

The amount of effort devoted to data collection and analysis and the level of detail reflected in the coordinated plan are left to local planning partners to determine, based on their own particular needs and resources.

While there is no requirement for local areas to develop a single plan that covers all relevant grant programs and target groups, rather than individual plans that focus on coordinated public transit-human services transportation for different target populations, FTA recommends a unified approach to maximize opportunities for improving coordination among transportation programs and services.

2.1.2 Planning Partners and Outreach Efforts

Consulting with and considering the contributions and comments offered by stakeholders are important elements of the coordinated planning process. Partners in the coordinated planning process must include the following:

- Public, private, and non-profit transportation providers;
- Public, private, and non-profit human services providers; and
- Representatives of the target populations (i.e., older adults, persons with disabilities, and individuals with lower incomes).

FTA notes that there is significant overlap between the groups that must be involved in the development of coordinated plans and the expanded list of stakeholders and partners and outreach efforts required by SAFETEA-LU for the statewide and metropolitan transportation planning processes, and encourages consistency between those processes.

The Section 5310, JARC, and New Freedom circulars contain extensive lists of the types of organi-

zations and agencies in each of the categories listed above, as well as others, to which outreach would be appropriate and desirable. Suggested partners include the following:

- State and regional transportation planning agencies, state departments of transportation, and local governments;
- Public transportation providers, including recipients of funding from FTA's Section 5307, 5309, and 5311 programs, and providers of Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) paratransit services;
- Private transportation providers, including brokers, taxi and school transportation operators, intercity bus carriers, and vanpool operators;
- Non-profit transportation providers;
- Past and current recipients of Section 5310, JARC, or New Freedom funding;
- Human services agencies that fund, purchase, or operate transportation services;
- Current and potential riders;
- Advocacy groups and independent living centers;
- Human services agencies, both public and non-profit, that administer programs and services for the target populations, such as health care (including mental health care), employment, job training and placement, housing, and related support services;
- Security and emergency management agencies;
- Tribal governments;
- Economic development organizations and employers;
- Faith-based and community organizations;
- State and local elected officials; and
- Policy experts.

Those responsible for developing coordinated plans must demonstrate good faith efforts to provide opportunities for stakeholders to become involved in the planning process and to encourage their participation. Techniques and activities such as the following may be used to provide access to the planning process and elicit input:

- Community planning sessions;
- Use of the United We Ride coordination assessment tool, *Framework For Action: Building the Fully Coordinated Transportation System*, which includes one version tailored to state agencies and another tailored to communities;

- Focus group meetings;
- Mail, e-mail, or in-person surveys;
- Formal needs assessment studies; and
- Meeting notices and invitations in a variety of formats (flyers, radio announcements, website postings, letters, e-mail).

In addition, meeting locations and materials must be accessible to and useable by persons with disabilities.

2.1.3 Competitive Project Selection Process

After the coordinated plan is prepared, JARC and New Freedom projects that are to receive funding must be selected through a competitive process that distributes funds in a fair and equitable manner. The selection process may be conducted by the designated recipient of grant program funds (in cooperation with the MPO in a large urban area) or conducted by another entity that is chosen by the designated recipient. The process may be conducted annually, or at intervals for up to 3 years, as determined by the designated recipient after considering factors such as project implementation time, cost, duration, and available funding.

The designated recipient is also responsible for developing project selection criteria and informing the public of those criteria, together with information about the goals of the particular grant program, funding availability, and the projects or services selected through the competitive process.

Many different approaches to the competitive process are possible. For instance, the process may be used to select specific projects, entities to provide certain services that have been determined to meet transportation needs, or communities that will implement identified projects. The Section 5310, JARC, and New Freedom circulars provide examples that illustrate how the competitive process can be used to do the following:

- Solicit and select project/service proposals designed to meet locally identified transportation needs;
- Select operators of particular services that have been given high priority in a coordinated plan;
- Select from among different projects or services that will meet a specific need;
- Choose areas that will receive funding to implement projects/services derived from their coordinated plans; and

- Select entities to implement projects that have been identified in a coordinated plan.

FTA's Section 5310 program circular describes a slightly different selection process for 5310 grant awards. States, which are apportioned Section 5310 funds according to a formula, prepare an annual program of projects for approval by FTA. The selection criteria and process used to distribute funds among subrecipients, who will implement the identified projects, must be explained in the state's State Management Plan that is on file with the FTA regional office. Section 5310 funds may be awarded to subrecipients by formula, subject to limits that are established by the state, or on a discretionary basis. Many states conduct an annual or biannual application process to solicit requests for grant funds from potential subrecipients.

2.1.4 Other Planning Process Issues and Requirements

Projects that will be funded with Section 5310, JARC, or New Freedom funding must be derived from a coordinated plan, and must also be included in other required transportation plans. In urbanized areas with populations of 50,000 or more, projects must be included in the area's Metropolitan Transportation Plan, Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), and Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP); in non-urbanized areas with populations of less than 50,000, projects must be included in the statewide long-range transportation plan and the STIP. As a result, coordination between the various planning processes is necessary. It is up to state DOTs, planning agencies, and other partners to determine whether the coordinated plans will be developed as part of metropolitan and statewide plans, or prepared separately.

In addition, a process for adopting the coordinated plan should be established locally. The designated recipient's application to FTA for funding from the Section 5310, JARC, or New Freedom program must include the date of the plan's adoption.

2.1.5 Funding Available for Coordinated Planning Activities

Funding from several federal sources may be used to support the coordinated planning process, including the following:

- Ten percent planning and administration portions of 5310, JARC, and New Freedom grants;

- Designated recipients may use these funds directly or pass them through to sub-recipients.
- No local match is required.

- Section 5307 formula funds;
- Section 5311 administrative funds; and
- Sections 5303 and 5304 Metropolitan Planning and Statewide Planning Funds.

CHAPTER 3 CURRENT PRACTICES OF STATE DOTs

This chapter summarizes the results of a survey of state DOTs regarding their coordinated planning efforts, and presents a number of mini-case studies that highlight approaches and practices that may be of interest to other DOTs. More detailed information about the survey and mini-case studies can be found in the project's research report.

3.1 Survey of State DOTs and Mini-Case Studies

An online survey was conducted in July 2008 to obtain information from state DOTs about their efforts to implement the SAFETEA-LU coordinated planning requirements.

There are several different roles that a state DOT may play in the development of coordinated plans. As noted in Chapter 2, the designated recipient of funds from the Section 5310, 5316, and 5317 programs must ensure that projects and services that receive funding from those programs are derived from a coordinated plan. State DOTs are the designated recipients of 5310 program funds for their state, and are typically, but not always, the designated recipient for JARC and New Freedom funds that are apportioned to small urban and non-urbanized areas. While the designated recipient must pay attention to coordinated plans when making funding decisions, some other entity may be responsible for the actual preparation of the coordinated plan(s).

The survey requested information about coordinated plans that the DOT is directly responsible for preparing, plans that cover funds that are typically apportioned to states that are prepared by entities other than the DOT, and the DOT's role in the coordinated plans being developed for large urbanized areas.

Twenty-seven states and the District of Columbia responded to the survey; an additional state provided basic information about its planning efforts via

e-mail. The survey results offer a qualitative look at the SAFETEA-LU coordinated planning requirements from the perspective of state DOTs.

Key points are summarized in the following statements.

- Between 86% and 95% of the state DOTs that responded to the survey are designated recipients for funds from one of the three grant programs covered by the coordinated planning requirements (the percentage varies by funding source). Only half of the state DOTs that responded to the survey is directly responsible for preparing a coordinated plan.
- Seventy-five percent of the state DOTs that responded to the survey and have direct responsibility for preparing a coordinated plan have completed a plan for FFY 2007; 42% were in the process of preparing a plan for FFY 2008.
- Other entities that are responsible for preparing a coordinated plan for funds that are administered by the state DOT include MPOs and regional planning organizations, counties and municipalities, and local transportation providers and human services agencies.
- A number of responding state DOTs have embraced the planning requirements and established ongoing statewide or regional planning groups or networks to develop the coordinated plans. Coordinated planning in those states continues to evolve and mature.
- Several states have provided robust technical assistance and support to enable other entities to develop coordinated plans.
- Respondents utilized approaches to data collection/analysis, involvement of stakeholders, and outreach activities that were suggested in FTA's *Federal Register* guidance and the coordinated planning chapters of the revised Section 5310, JARC, and New Freedom program circulars. Few additional approaches were reported by responding DOTs.
- Sixty-five percent of responding state DOTs are also involved in the coordinated planning activities in large urbanized areas, and are playing a variety of roles, most notably providing policy direction or guidance, serving on advisory or stakeholder committees, providing funding to support the efforts, and supplying planning process materials or templates.

- Staff time constraints, the level of effort needed to meet the planning requirements relative to the amount of funding available from the three grant programs, and convincing stakeholders to participate in the planning process were among the top challenges noted by state DOTs responding to the survey.
- Some state DOTs are seeking information, resources, and answers pertaining to transportation coordination and the technology that can be used to facilitate it for use in their future planning activities.

Mini-case studies of states that have adopted interesting or innovative approaches to coordinated public transit-human services transportation planning were conducted as a means of highlighting best practices and illustrating the themes and trends that emerged from the survey of state DOTs. The mini-case studies are included here as models for other states to consider as they develop future coordinated plans.

In selecting the mini-case study sites, an effort was made to find examples of approaches that would be instructive for other state DOTs, and a representation of a variety of planning environments—states containing large urbanized areas to states that are primarily rural in nature—and geographic regions.

Table 1 summarizes a number of key characteristics of the case study sites, including the following:

- Geographic region,
- Type of funding for which the state DOT is the designated recipient,
- Role of DOT in development of coordinated plan(s), and
- Interesting features.

As the table shows, the selected sites represent a range of characteristics in each category.

Information and materials from each of the sites were collected through telephone interviews, e-mail, and review of DOT websites.

3.2 Alaska Department of Transportation (AKDOT)

In Alaska, the DOT is the designated recipient for Section 5310, JARC, and New Freedom funds for small urban and non-urbanized areas. Local communities are responsible for preparing coordinated plans. AKDOT's experience illustrates the

Table 1 Summary of mini-case study site characteristics

State DOT	Funds for which the DOT is the Designated Recipient					Plans for which the DOT is Responsible for Preparing					Key Features	Geo-graphic Region
	Section 5310	Section 5316 (JARC), Small Urban Areas (50,000–199,999)	Section 5316, Non-urbanized Areas (<50,000)	Section 5317 (New Freedom), Small Urban Areas (50,000–199,999)	Section 5317, Urbanized Areas (<50,000)	Section 5310	Section 5316 (JARC), Small Urban Areas (50,000–199,999)	Section 5316, Non-urbanized Areas (<50,000)	Section 5317 (New Freedom), Small Urban Areas (50,000–199,999)	Section 5317, Non-urbanized Areas (<50,000)		
Alaska	•	•	•	•	•						General plan template for remote communities without coordination opportunities, inclusion of other funding programs, success in very rural areas	Northwest
Connecticut	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	Building on successful JARC planning efforts, development by ConDOT of a consistent approach and format for plans across the state	Northeast
Illinois	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	Relationship of HSTP process with other Illinois coordination efforts, including interagency committee, coordination assistance to communities, and expanded Section 5311 program	Midwest
Mississippi	•		•		•			•		•	Statewide coordination summits, regional coordination planning advisory groups, mobility management demonstration projects	Gulf Coast

Oregon	•	•	•	•	•		Support provided to counties, transit districts, and tribal governments; evaluation of coordination plans; experiences of tribal governments new to transit and coordination planning	Pacific Northwest
South Carolina	•	•	•	•	•		Inclusion of a number of other funding programs, coordination with other transportation planning activities	South
Texas	•	•	•	•	•	•	Preparation of plans by entities other than DOT for funds that the DOT receives; support and financial assistance for local entities; regional forums to encourage human service agency participation	Southwest
Wisconsin	•	•	•	•	•		Extensive technical assistance and toolkit provided to local entities; evolution of planning process in 2nd year to focus on regions, implementation	Great Lakes

challenges presented by the requirement to develop coordinated plans in very rural areas, and the successes that can nonetheless be achieved.

Coordinated Planning Process

A coordinated public transit-human services transportation plan became required by federal law for Section 5310, JARC, and New Freedom funds from the FTA beginning in 2007. The Alaska State Transit Office also requires projects funded from the Alaska Mental Health Trust to be derived from coordinated plans.

Alaska had no coordinated planning process in place before the federal requirements were enacted. A factor unique to Alaska is that it is a very rural state that has a dispersed population. Several remote communities are comprised of just a few hundred people and exist off of the road system. These communities are used to having very few resources. An upside is that volunteering to help one another is an important part of life and allows for these communities to quickly understand the idea of coordination planning. On the other hand, the lack of community resources makes it difficult for coordination to occur successfully because available resources are stretched thin. In many cases, formal social service organizations do not exist in these communities.

In communities where coordination between human services and public transportation providers is not possible, such as when no agencies exist in a very small community, the community can use AKDOT's General Plan for Limited Coordination Communities. AKDOT created this General Plan to allow small communities without coordination possibilities to still be able to apply for funds. AKDOT created this plan with the help of a consultant in 2007 and revised and updated the plan for 2008. Rural communities with no coordination partners must adopt the State General Plan for Limited Coordination Communities before becoming eligible for a competitive reward of federal funds.

A community has to contact AKDOT to see if it qualifies for the General Plan for Limited Coordination Communities. If AKDOT determines that the community has resources and agencies that could coordinate with one another, then the community does not qualify for the General Plan for Limited Coordination Communities. In that case, the community must create its own coordinated plan if it wants to apply for federal or Alaska Mental Health

Trust funds. The Alaska Mental Health Trust, however, requires a coordinated plan for all funds *except* to support planning. Therefore, the Mental Health Trust could be used by communities to fund coordination plans.

All coordinated plans developed by their coordination groups must include an appendix listing current prioritized projects seeking funding. The plan and attached projects must be adopted by a local government by resolution with a public hearing using proper notice. The local government could be a city council, borough governing body, or tribal council depending on the community. These requirements are similar for communities using the State General Plan for Limited Coordination Communities, in which case those communities must attach a list of current projects seeking funding as an appendix to the General Plan. Such a community's projects must be linked to the coordination strategies listed within the General Plan, and then the General Plan and attached projects must be adopted by the local government.

Funding applications for Section 5310, JARC, New Freedom, and Alaska Mental Health Trust funds use the same electronic application forms and evaluation process. The four funding sources are blended to provide simplicity and ease-of-use to applicants. The electronic grant applications prepared by AKDOT staff ask specific questions drawn from the coordination plan and the coordination group's process, as well as questions pertinent to the type of project (e.g., replacement vehicles, expansion vehicles, purchase of services, and so forth). Answers are scored by staff and the project evaluation committee in the competitive selection process. For Purchase of Services project applications, the lead agency for the coordinated plan must apply on behalf of all community agencies requesting funds and demonstrate active coordination is occurring.

In many instances, the lead agency is different from the agency requesting funds. This occurred in the community of Haines, in which the Borough (equivalent to a county) paid a staffer to lead the planning process even though a senior center providing door-to-door service for the elderly was the entity that wanted to request federal funds. The Borough Administration felt it was the Borough's governing duty to lead the planning process because it believed that the only public transportation service in the community would be threatened otherwise.

As a starting point for creating the State General Plan, the state DOT used a variety of information. It

collected information from the Alaska Public Transportation Management System, a database of transit information drawn from transit operators and users. It used information provided by remote communities in applications already received for funds. It gathered information from interviews with villages, U.S. Census information, other State departments and studies, and teleconference coordination plan meetings.

The state DOT assisted in planning efforts of those communities that created their own coordinated plans. Local communities had the support of AKDOT as they conducted stakeholder interviews, planning workshops, analysis of service availability, analysis of demographic data, GIS mapping, Internet research, surveys of transportation providers, and surveys of human services agencies. Stakeholders involved in the coordinated planning process included municipal governments, school transportation providers, non-profit transportation providers, human services agencies with transportation services, existing and potential transit riders, protection and advocacy organizations, tribes and tribal representatives, and economic development agencies. Outreach was conducted through community planning sessions, notices and flyers, invitation letters, and telephone and teleconferencing. Support from AKDOT was limited, however, because only one staff member exists to assist in the coordinated planning process.

Results to Date

Thirteen communities completed coordinated plans in 2007, the first year of the new requirements. The state DOT also completed the General Plan for Limited Coordination Communities, and will update it each year. Federal funds have been distributed based on the coordination plans. One of the key criteria for the competitive selection process is how closely a project fits into a coordinated plan.

Three new coordination groups were created in rural communities that produced coordination plans. These communities had no public transit and created the plans with few previous plans in place and no funding from the state. These communities are great examples of cooperation. The lead agencies did not even apply for money. They just took the lead in creating the coordinated plans on behalf of those who needed funding.

One example of a community that was motivated and started from scratch in creating a coordinated plan was Haines, mentioned previously. As part of its

plan, community members inventoried every vehicle in town that might be a candidate for human services-public transportation coordination. They inventoried the make, model, year, owning agency, vehicle identification number, length, and capacity of each vehicle. Even though the community was new to coordinated planning, they did the best job of inventorying potential partners and their vehicles, in AKDOT's view, out of all the communities that submitted plans in 2007.

In general, AKDOT's perspective is that it will do everything it can to assist an interested and motivated community to complete a coordinated plan. In one instance, 40 rural villages that are only connected by a river defined themselves as a local community. An initial planning meeting was required, so a public notice was faxed to all of the villages. Then AKDOT held a teleconference meeting in which members of each of the villages called in and each discussed its community needs. An AKDOT staff member administered the call and typed up the meeting minutes afterward. The use of faxes and teleconferencing overcame the difficult geography and was able to jumpstart the planning process in this region of 40 villages.

AKDOT is currently conducting outreach for the second round of funding awards. Previous coordinated plans were created as a result of someone in a community wanting to apply for funds. AKDOT is trying to reach out to communities that are unfamiliar with the planning requirements for funds and have not yet completed a coordinated plan. AKDOT is trying to notify communities that they may not need to create a new planning document from scratch. They can piggyback on previous plans, such as a comprehensive plan, economic development plan, or a transportation plan. Many times communities with those previous documents just have to add a coordinated human services-public transportation element and make other minor edits, and then the community has a coordinated plan.

Key Features

The AKDOT staff created a "Coordination Plan Guide" that included a needs assessment outline and direction on public involvement and coordination plan requirements for local communities. No specific template was provided to communities to follow when creating the planning documents. However, adopted plans submitted to AKDOT were placed on

AKDOT's website and provided to other communities, so many communities likely used each other's plans as a guide.

The State General Plan for 2008 was to be broadened beyond the scope of the first year to include more about volunteer strategies, fuel conservation, and efficiency issues. The state DOT planned on having its consultant create a "fill-in-the-blank" approach that small communities could easily use, but the exact nature of that format was yet to be decided at the time of publication.

The grants that the groups applied for blend four funding sources. AKDOT streamlined the application process by using an electronic system that it received from the Colorado DOT. AKDOT encouraged applicants to copy and paste information directly from the coordination plan into the online application. Due to staff time constraints, this process allowed people on the selection committee to see that the applicant complied with requirements for coordination without having to read the entire coordination plan. Using copy and paste also reduces redundancy and tediousness in the process for applicants.

Challenges

A problem in the coordinated planning process was a lack of clarity about terms. Communities embarking on the coordinated planning process confused the term "strategy" and listed projects instead of strategies. AKDOT directed communities to interpret "strategy" to mean an overall objective, while a "project" is a way to achieve that overall objective. The word "local" was another term that lacked definition. Alaska has several regions that do not have plans of any type, so many areas lacked a defined planning area. AKDOT decided that each community was responsible to define what "local" meant to them as long as they were able to meet requirements for the planning and adoption of a coordinated plan. The 40 remote villages mentioned earlier defined themselves as "local."

The Haines community struggled in its ability to create planning strategies. For example, community members efficiently conducted an inventory of vehicles, but they ran into difficulty when trying to analyze how much excess capacity existed and how to maximize the community's vehicle capacity. For instance, school buses may sit unutilized for large portions of the day, but the community may not know the best way to fill the bus capacity. This is a

point where the community could use an expert in mobility management to provide assistance in formulating strategies and analyzing data to improve transportation in the community.

AKDOT faces a major challenge in providing guidance to communities creating their own coordination plans. AKDOT only has one staff member available to assist communities with coordinated planning, and felt that FTA provided little guidance on the coordination plan process. The biggest challenge, however, was not in guiding coordination plans being created by communities. Rather, the challenge involved handling remote dispersed communities without coordination potential. Despite this situation, AKDOT staff made every effort to extend its assistance to rural communities and created a General Plan to allow communities without coordination potential the ability to apply for funds.

Although AKDOT believes that the creation of the General Plan for Limited Coordination Communities is a good strategy for handling coordination requirements for communities without coordination opportunities, the DOT felt that the document did not function as a template for communities with little coordination potential, as was intended, but rather as a plan for several specific communities of that type. There are plans to create a revised General Plan to serve as a model plan that highlights the transportation and coordination issues faced in remote areas, so that other remote communities can tie their projects needing funding into issues addressed in the General Plan.

Limited funding to support the planning effort was also a challenge. In the first year, communities had to come up with the money themselves to complete a coordination plan. There was no time to apply for planning funds. In many instances, a local governing body such as a village council or bureau government scraped the coordinated plans together. If a local agency did not have any money to support the planning effort, then they might provide a staff member's time. Motivated communities found a variety of ways in which to complete a coordinated plan, and AKDOT provided support and guidance as much as possible, while still adhering to the standard that completion of the final plan was ultimately the responsibility of the local community.

Finally, the coordinated plan requirement in practice is disconnected from the situation that Alaska faces. Alaska only has eight public transit systems in the entire state. Coordination among local organizations quickly turns to human services agencies bear-

ing the entire burden of public transportation. In a time when human services agencies have dwindling funding and are limiting service, it is unlikely that many of them can achieve the same mobility enhancements that public transportation agencies could achieve. Human services agencies provide healthcare and related services foremost, and transportation is an auxiliary service.

Despite these challenges, AKDOT and the Alaskan communities that have created coordinated plans have done an excellent job at meeting SAFETEA-LU requirements for coordinated plans.

A copy of the Coordination Plan Guide prepared by AKDOT to explain the elements of the coordinated planning process to local communities, and a printed copy of AKDOT's Grant Application form for Section 5310, JARC, New Freedom, and Alaska Mental Health Trust funds are can be found in Appendix A.

Lessons Learned

Somewhat paradoxically, AKDOT found that organizations that were newly formed in order to conduct coordination planning were actually better at coordination than well-established organizations. The groups that had been addressing transportation coordination issues for years believed that their former practices were fine. The older groups were used to doing things for themselves and had preconceived notions of coordination. On the other hand, newly formed groups took the guidelines they were given and excelled at creating coordination plans.

The part of the coordinated planning process that has worked best from AKDOT's perspective is the requirement that a local body must legally adopt the plan by resolution with a public hearing. This is required each year in order to receive funding. Coordinated plans must be revisited each year with new projects added to the appendix before they can be officially adopted. When reviewing the federal requirements for coordinated plans for funds, AKDOT noticed that the public notice process was a high priority that FTA would look at strictly when analyzing a state's coordinated planning process. By requiring a local governing body to legally adopt a plan by resolution with a public hearing, it ensures that the public notice process will always be clearly documented and will meet federal requirements. An equally important benefit is that by requiring the local government to adopt the plan, local elected officials automatically get involved in the coordinated planning process. Many

communities have elected officials who are not involved in planning, and as a result, it is often difficult to attain funds in those communities because the plan is not on the radars of elected officials. By requiring a local agency to convince the local elected body to support a project, it brings elected officials into the process and helps the organization get local money. Consequently, a local match of funds helps the community get a higher score in the competitive award of federal funds for projects.

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3.3 Connecticut Department of Transportation (ConnDOT)

The state of Connecticut's coordinated plan is known as the Locally Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan (LOCHSTP). ConnDOT is the designated recipient for Section 5310, JARC, and New Freedom funds, not only for small urban and non-urbanized areas, but for the state's three large urbanized areas as well. ConnDOT prepared a statewide coordinated plan on the basis of individual plans developed in each of five regions.

The following case study was prepared with information provided by ConnDOT and the South Western Regional Planning Agency (SWRPA), one of the three regional planning organizations involved in the development of the LOCHSTP plan for the Bridgeport/Stamford urbanized area (BSUZA).

Coordinated Planning Process

ConnDOT took the lead in developing and initiating the LOCHSTP process, building on the structure utilized for the state's successful JARC planning

activities in recent years. Five planning regions were identified, based on the boundaries of the state's Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) and Regional Planning Organizations (RPOs). In Connecticut, the term "RPO" includes Regional Planning Agencies, Councils of Governments, and Councils of Elected Officials. MPOs are a different type of entity (although some RPOs provide staff to MPOs).

Three of the five regions each contained a large urbanized area—Hartford (North Central region), New Haven (South Central region), and Bridgeport/Stamford (this region was referred to as the Bridgeport/Stamford UZA). The other two regions each included one or two small urban areas—Danbury, CT and NY and Waterbury in the Northwest region, and Norwich/New London in the Eastern region—and non-urbanized areas. Each region encompassed more than one RPO planning area. These same regions were the basis of JARC plans prepared prior to 2007.

ConnDOT is the designated recipient for Section 5310, JARC, and New Freedom funds, not only for small urban and non-urbanized areas, but for the state's large urbanized areas as well. In the three large urbanized area regions, the RPOs played the lead role in the development of the coordinated plans. In the other two regions, ConnDOT facilitated the planning activities.

ConnDOT also provided strong support for the RPOs and their planning partners so that plans would be consistent across regions, including the following tools:

- Development of a plan outline (based on the plan prepared for the Bridgeport/Stamford urbanized area);
- Model planning process steps and timeline;
- Printed answers to FAQs;
- Presentations to state agencies and other groups to explain the coordinated planning process requirements;
- Survey instrument to collect information about transportation services and gaps; and
- Standardized project prioritization criteria.

Relationships formed during Connecticut's JARC planning process prior to 2007 and the administration of the 5310 program (in which the regions are actively involved) supplied the nucleus of planning partner and stakeholder groups that undertook the planning activities in each region. RPOs, transit providers, workforce development organizations, and human

services agencies were joined by additional human services partners, members of the general public, elected officials, and representatives of the target populations for the LOCHSTP planning process.

Another partner was the University of Connecticut's University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities Education, Research, and Service (UCEDD). UCEDD provided representatives to participate in the regional planning groups and also conducted focus groups and community forums that generated information about transportation service gaps and needs that was used in the regional plans.

Each area tailored the process slightly to reflect its local environment. ConnDOT then synthesized the five regional plans into one statewide plan for FY 2007. Appendices to the statewide plan describe the development of the coordinated plan in each of the five regions in detail.

Each region conducted a competitive project selection process, in collaboration with ConnDOT and other planning partners. One region, where planning partners had more difficulty with identifying specific projects to address service gaps, committing to projects without assurances of receiving non-federal matching funds from state sources, and identifying lead agencies for proposed projects, issued a Request for Proposals and distributed a formal funding application. In the other regions, the coordination planning committees/working groups and ConnDOT identified and prioritized strategies. Those priorities were used to make funding decisions.

Results to Date

ConnDOT developed a statewide plan for FY 2007 that incorporates each of the five regional plans. The state plan has been adopted by each of the regional planning bodies and the three large urban areas.

Because Connecticut undertook development of its first LOCHSTP plans prior to the issuance of final coordinated planning guidance from FTA, plans will be updated for FY 2008 to incorporate additional elements, if necessary. In the future, plans will be updated every 4–5 years, although regional groups may refine plans more frequently to add new information, address new service gaps, or include new desirable transportation strategies.

Key Features

Connecticut's LOCHSTP process featured a number of interesting elements.

Consensus was developed among the planning regions that ConnDOT should take the lead role in developing FY 2007 plans. ConnDOT had played a central role in the development of regional plans for JARC funding prior to 2007, which enabled the agency to coordinate JARC funds with matching funds from the Connecticut Department of Social Services' other ConnDOT transportation sources. ConnDOT and the regions all agreed that approaching the development of coordinated plans in the same manner made sense. ConnDOT's role continued for FY 2008 plan updates, although the agency intended to involve the large urban areas to a greater degree in revising the plans for their regions, by relying on the MPOs to take a more active role in planning meetings and distributing information to planning partners.

ConnDOT's facilitation of planning efforts in the portions of the state outside of the three large urban areas, and provision of technical assistance and other supports, helped to ensure that the regional plans were consistent in content and level of detail while reflecting local needs, priorities, and resources. For example, all five regions used the following same basic process and timeline for developing their plans:

- Identification of stakeholders and formation of a planning working group or committee;
- Surveys of transportation providers and others to identify existing services;
- Determination of service gaps and unmet needs, and the best ways to address them, through analysis of survey responses, stakeholder and public meetings, and discussions within the planning groups; and
- Ranking of strategies or projects based on a common set of evaluation criteria.

The regional plans all followed the same outline and organized service gaps into the same categories (information and awareness, geographical, temporal, client, and service quality), which facilitated the development of a meaningful statewide plan.

Connecticut's coordinated planning efforts built on the state's successful JARC planning activities, heavily involving the regional planning organizations that also played key roles in the JARC planning process, utilizing the same regional boundaries, and including many of the same partner organizations.

Connecticut's 5310 application process is being modified to take LOCHSTP plans and activities into account. While ConnDOT intends to coordinate the

two processes more closely in the future (by using service gaps identified in LOCHSTP plans to help prioritize 5310 funding decisions, for example), 5310 application evaluation criteria have been revised, with input from the five regions, so that additional "points" are awarded to applicants that have participated in LOCHSTP activities.

As noted above, the University of Connecticut's UCEDD provided assistance to ConnDOT and the regional planning groups as they prepared LOCHSTPs. UCEDD is one of 60 or so University Centers for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities, Education, Research, and Service funded by the federal Department of Health and Human Services across the country. UCEDDs provide education, research, information dissemination, training, technical assistance, and other services to individuals, families, state and local government agencies, service providers, and others, with the goal of increasing independence and community integration for persons with developmental disabilities. Transportation is one of the areas of emphasis for the UCEDDs. UCEDDs, together with similar entities in other fields, such as the University Research Centers funded by the federal DOT, may offer an additional resource to other states as partners in the coordinated planning process.

For samples of materials used in Connecticut's LOCHSTP process, see Appendix B. These materials include:

- LOCHSTP process steps,
- LOCHSTP plan outline,
- FAQ brochure,
- Transportation service survey, and
- Project prioritization criteria.

Challenges

ConnDOT cited the following as the main challenges presented by the LOCHSTP process:

- **Staff time constraints.** ConnDOT's involvement as the lead agency in two planning regions and a key partner in the other three required attendance at numerous meetings throughout the state during the planning process. ConnDOT developed agendas, lead meetings, and attempted to provide summaries to meeting participants, all of which required a significant amount of staff time.
- **Coordination of the new planning process with other statewide planning processes.**

Incorporating the regional coordinated plans into other planning processes and documents was difficult in the first round, primarily due to timing. The state's long range transportation plan and 5310 application process were both well underway when the LOCHSTP process began. Determining a LOCHSTP cycle that will allow plans to be considered in the other planning processes from the beginning is a task that ConnDOT is undertaking for the next round of LOCHSTP plans.

- **The level of effort needed to meet the planning requirements in relation to the amount of funding available to Connecticut through the three grant programs.** As a result of the JARC program change from discretionary to formula funding, the state lost a significant amount of financial support for access to jobs transportation, and New Freedom program funding is also fairly limited.

As one of the RPOs that developed the Bridgeport/Stamford urbanized area's LOCHSTP plan, SWRPA identified aspects of the planning process that were challenging at the regional level:

- **Meeting statewide planning timeframe requirements.** SWRPA and its partners worked hard to draft the BSUZA LOCHSTP plan within ConnDOT's required timeframe. However, it was not until a later date that plans for other regions were completed and decisions about state funding to provide non-federal matching funds were made.
- **Relying on centralized data collection approaches.** Techniques and instruments for gathering information from stakeholders that were developed or administered by other entities sometimes did not produce the level of detail that SWRPA would have collected on its own.
- **Identifying sources of non-federal matching funds.** To meet the deadline for completing the LOCHSTP plans, the region had to develop specific projects without knowing whether matching funds would be available from state sources. Since the required non-federal portions of project funding were beyond the local resources of some organizations, identifying projects that could be implemented was challenging.

- **Coordinating the LOCHSTP process with other transportation programs.** The established, ongoing 5310 and JARC funding processes and cycles made it difficult to incorporate information that came out of the LOCHSTP plan into those processes, and to develop funding strategies for LOCHSTP projects. In addition, other state transportation programs, such as the Municipal Dial-A-Ride program, the Governor's Bus Service Initiative, and sources of federal transportation funding could be used to move LOCHSTP projects forward if the funding processes and cycles were more coordinated.
- **Federal project eligibility criteria.** As an urbanized area with established transportation services for the target populations, the BSUZA region found it difficult to identify projects that would provide "new" services and be eligible for New Freedom funding.
- **Getting projects led by non-traditional partners underway.** In Connecticut, organizations that have participated in the 5310 and/or JARC programs in the past had contractual agreements with ConnDOT in place which could be used to cover new LOCHSTP projects. Contractual arrangements with new entities are taking time to put in place, and project implementation has been delayed as a result.

Lessons Learned

ConnDOT staff was pleased to find that planning partners and stakeholders were enthusiastic about participating in the LOCHSTP process, even though meetings and other activities required a commitment of time and effort. Stakeholders were able to determine the level of their participation, from signing up for e-mail updates or completing a transportation provider survey up to attending regular meetings and providing input on an ongoing basis. ConnDOT would have liked to have seen more participation on the part of private transportation providers, however. In the next round of plan updates, an attempt will be made to lay out meeting agendas well in advance, so that stakeholders with little available time are able to pick and choose the activities in which they can take part.

ConnDOT found that its "FAQ" brochure was very effective as a means of explaining the coordi-

nated planning requirements to planning partners and stakeholders. (See Appendix B for a copy of the FAQ brochure.)

The consistent, statewide approach to coordinated planning that was adopted in Connecticut helped to get the LOCHSTP process organized and underway, and there were advantages to centralizing some aspects of LOCHSTP plan development. However, regions vary in terms of the staff, time, and resources they have available to devote to planning activities and to developing, funding, and implementing transportation projects, types of transportation services that currently exist and are needed, and service operating environments. As the LOCHSTP plans are updated, ConnDOT and the regions have agreed that the regions (particularly those encompassing the state's large urban areas) will have more flexibility. SWRPA is looking forward to a more independent role. For BSUZA, this will mean conducting more individual outreach and fewer large stakeholder meetings, focusing on modifying plans to reflect new projects and new service gaps, and developing viable projects that can be funded and implemented.

SWRPA offered several suggestions for other states that are dividing responsibilities for preparing coordinated plans between the state DOT and regional planning groups:

- Consider developing, implementing, monitoring, and modifying the planning process with the aid of a technical or advisory committee, composed of representatives of the entities that will be responsible for creating the coordinated plans. Such a group could be formed at either the state or the regional level.
- While it is useful to have a consistent set of selection criteria to evaluate projects across regions, which is necessary when available funding is not sufficient to support all proposed projects, urbanized areas and non-urbanized areas are very different, and using identical criteria to prioritize projects may not result in a fair evaluation. For example: ridership or productivity will be lower in non-urbanized areas where the average trip length is much longer than in an urban area, so selection criteria based on either of those measures will favor the urban area projects.
- Guidance, templates, and recommended schedules are helpful, but need to be constant and

not change during the course of the planning process.

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3.4 Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT)

Illinois' approach to the coordinated planning process, known as the Human Services Transportation Plan (HSTP) process, illustrates how regional coordinated plans were prepared with central support and assistance from IDOT and several planning partners at the state level.

Coordinated Planning Process

The Illinois Department of Transportation—Division of Public and Intermodal Transportation (DPIT) is the designated recipient for FTA Sections 5310, 5316 and 5317 funds for small urbanized and rural areas of the state, and as such is responsible for implementing the new coordinated transit planning mandates set forth in SAFETEA-LU. It should be noted that the state previously employed a process for administering the FTA Section 5310 program,

which was amended to meet HSTP requirements and ensure local endorsement.

These new planning requirements called for a “locally developed coordinated human service transportation plan.” DPIT began their implementation efforts by researching how other states were approaching the coordinated planning process, paying close attention to states that had Rural Planning Organizations and/or had already made strides in meeting the new federal mandates.

DPIT outlined a process that adhered to the new requirements, including both administrative and outreach components. In small urbanized areas, metropolitan planning organizations spearheaded the planning process. Since no rural planning infrastructure existed, an extensive outreach effort was undertaken to establish rural planning regions, ensuring that local transportation needs would be addressed in the rural areas. Partnerships were formed with existing regional planning commissions, who previously had no responsibility or authority regarding transportation planning. Their support was instrumental in garnering local input and participation in the rural and small urbanized areas of the state. Regional Coordinators and MPO staff served as liaisons between the local areas and IDOT. A multi-agency State Oversight Committee (SOC), representing other potential funding partners and human services transportation stakeholders, assisted in the development of policies and procedures as well as provided leadership in project evaluation.

The approach taken to the development of coordinated plans in Illinois is described in more detail below.

Supportive Planning Partners

In crafting the policies and procedures that would govern the new planning processes, DPIT worked closely with the Interagency Coordinating Committee on Transportation, Regional Technical Assistance Center, Illinois Public Transportation Association, and the Illinois Association of Regional Councils. Together, these partners were able to provide technical support to the rural planning regions, and assist the SOC in evaluation, selection, and program development.

Interagency Coordinating Committee on Transportation. The Interagency Coordinating Committee on Transportation (ICCT) was established in 2003 to

set priorities for improving access to transportation for the transportation disadvantaged and also functions in an advisory capacity to the SOC. The ICCT made a number of recommendations for improving coordination among transportation services in the state, prior to the SAFETEA-LU mandates, and has set forth a list of objectives and initiatives to guide the future work of the group. ICCT’s *Coordination Primer: A Guide to Help Your Community Navigate Transportation Coordination* is one of the tools that was used as a starting point for the planning process. This primer provides a step by step methodology for counties to develop public transportation systems and is required for those counties in Illinois seeking FTA Section 5311 funding. The Coordination Primer is available online at <http://www.iira.org/outreach/rtac.asp>.

Additionally, the ICCT’s recommendations regarding coordination consisted of the following:

- Continue the ICCT’s activities as a statewide transportation coordinating body,
- Use ICCT as an advisory group to IDOT as the coordinated public transit-human services transportation plans required by SAFETEA-LU are developed,
- Make better use of federal JARC funding by involving stakeholders in planning efforts and using all available funds,
- Develop and sustain a technical assistance program to support transportation coordination, and
- Involve regional stakeholders in statewide transportation planning.

Illinois Rural Transit Assistance Center. The Illinois Rural Transit Assistance Center (RTAC) is part of the Illinois Institute of Rural Affairs at Western Illinois University. Under a contract with IDOT, RTAC operates the Rural Transit Assistance Program (RTAP) for Illinois, which offers a source of technical assistance and training on a variety of topics to transportation providers in non-urbanized areas.

The RTAC also serves as the clearinghouse for the ICCT. In that capacity, the RTAC personnel who serve as staff to the ICCT are responsible for the following tasks:

- Maintaining a library of coordination literature;
- Providing information about ICCT, coordination, and related topics on its website;

- Maintaining a database of transportation services in the state;
- Responding to requests from municipalities, transportation providers, and community organizations for technical assistance with the planning and implementation of coordinated transportation services;
- Updating the downstate capital transit capital needs assessment program annually; and
- Engaging the public in outreach and education activities.

Illinois Association of Regional Councils. The Illinois Association of Regional Councils (ILARC) represents all of the state’s regional planning councils. Although these Councils had some regional planning experience, they typically did not engage in any formal or mandated public or specialized transportation planning process. However, they provided a regional structure that could assist the rural planning regions; worked closely with many of the non-traditional transportation stakeholders; and were willing to assist with technical support and resources.

Policies and Procedures

Two concurrent approaches were used to ensure that the state properly administered the two new funding programs and the HSTP planning requirement: administration and outreach. The administrative component dealt with the formal aspects of the process such as the competitive selection process, while the outreach component focused on educating stakeholders about the planning process and opportunities to get involved.

One key aspect of the administrative component was the establishment of the SOC. The SOC provides guidance on the planning process and evaluates project requests for funding. It included the following main roles and responsibilities:

- Endorsement of the model template to be used in each planning region to aid in HSTP plan development;
- Endorsement of policies and procedures for JARC and New Freedom project endorsement, selection, evaluation and incorporation into the State Transportation Improvement Programs (STIP); and
- Assistance in the review, evaluation, and recommendation to DPIT of Section 5316 and Section 5317 projects to be included in the STIP.

Its membership is made up of state level agencies that are stakeholders in the coordinated planning process, including the following:

- DPIT, Chair;
- RTAC;
- Illinois Department of Aging;
- Illinois Department of Human Services;
- Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity;
- Illinois Department of Child and Family Services;
- Lieutenant Governor’s Office;
- Illinois Public Transportation Association;
- ILARC; and
- MPO representative (representing areas less than 200,000 in population).

Simultaneously, the outreach component was underway and centered on getting feedback on the rural planning regions and working with the appropriate local stakeholders to create Regional Transportation Committees. Creating these regions required significant effort and was done through an open process. DPIT staff conducted meetings statewide to get feedback from local and regional stakeholders.

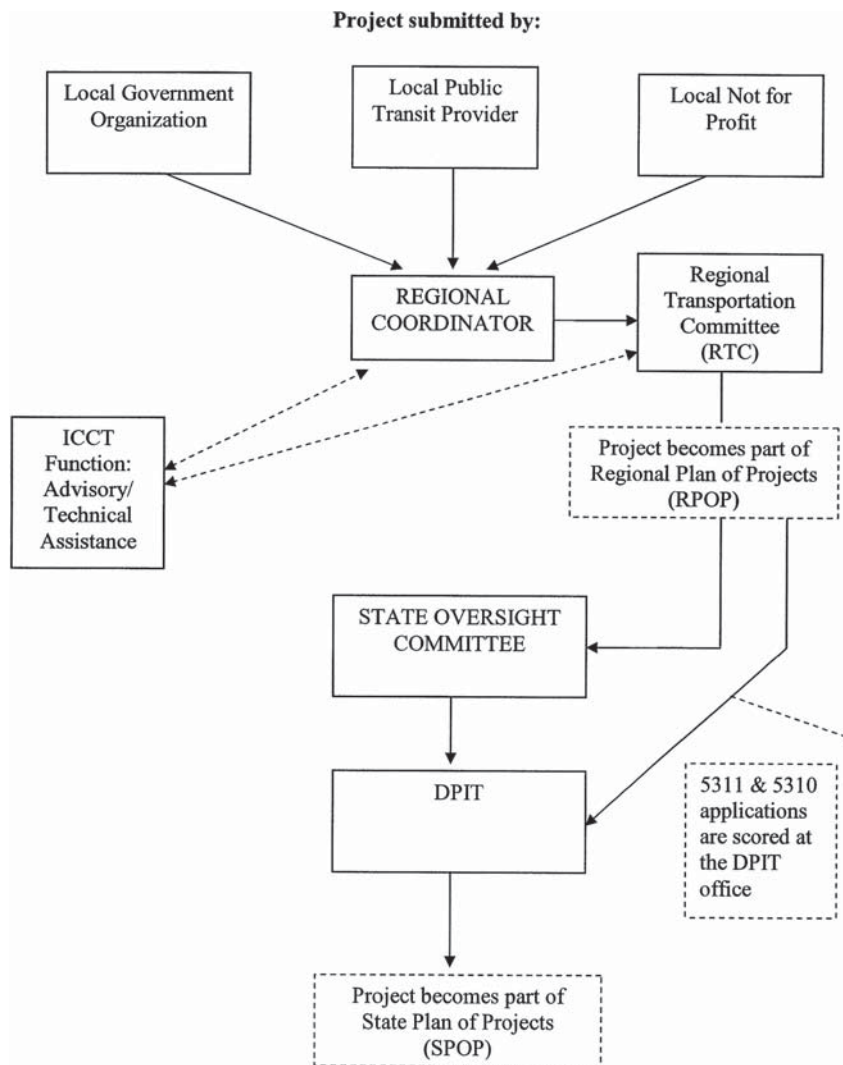
As was previously noted, each rural region was served by a Regional Transportation Committee (RTC), which was staffed by a Regional Coordinator. The RTCs are essentially a roundtable of transportation providers, and stakeholders from the targeted populations (older adults, persons with disabilities, and low income individuals) as well as human services agencies and others interested in the planning process. The RTCs were responsible for developing a vision, assessing the “transportation gaps” for the targeted populations, and coordinating future transportation services. Regional Coordinators served as the liaison between IDOT and the local RTCs, providing guidance during the planning process. The Regional Coordinator positions are funded through inter-agency agreements between IDOT and the respective Regional Planning Councils. Each coordinator’s main responsibilities included the following tasks:

- Act as a liaison between IDOT/DPIT and the RTC;
- Schedule, provide notice and facilitate RTC meetings;
- Review, evaluate, and rank projects requesting funding; and
- Assist with the post award process.

Since many of these Regional Coordinators had little to no transportation planning experience, IDOT hosted educational trainings to ensure they understood their role as it related to the new planning requirements. IDOT staff as well as hired consultants conducted trainings on HSTP plan development, application review, and project ranking.

IDOT conducted a Call for Projects for the combined FFY 2006 and FFY 2007 JARC and New Freedom funds, concurrently for the respective programs. An application review class was also held for applicants (as well as Regional Coordinators) to allow for any questions or issues of DPIT staff. Applications

were then submitted to the regions for “local” review and ranking. Each RTC was charged with reviewing and ranking the selected projects based on the evaluation criteria for the respective programs. The two highest ranked projects were then forwarded to DPIT for distribution to the SOC. The SOC conducted the “statewide” review and ranking, and proposed a funding program to the DPIT Director. Fifteen JARC applications and 11 New Freedom applications were submitted to the SOC for review. The SOC recommended funding for 10 JARC projects and 9 New Freedom projects. An overview of the project selection process is shown in Figure 1.



Illinois Department of Transportation-Division of Public and Intermodal Transportation
Downstate Area Programs, 2007

Figure 1 Overview of project selection process in Illinois.

Results to Date

- Each of the 11 rural regions adopted Human Services Transportation Plans in 2008.
- Successful outreach was made to those groups that have not traditionally been involved in transportation planning—more than 300 participants attended meetings conducted as part of the planning process.
- IDOT was able to allocate all of the FFY 2006 and FFY 2007 dollars that were available to rural areas, all of the FFY 2006 dollars available to the small urban areas, and some of the FFY 2007 dollars to the small urban areas. A second call for projects will be conducted in fall 2008 to expend the remaining FFY 2007 dollars for the small urban areas.
- Partnerships were formed between local human services agencies, state agencies and community organizations. These partnerships foster opportunities for on-going communication which will contribute to the goals of better coordination among transportation and human services interests.

Key Features

One of the most noteworthy elements of DPIT's planning process was its goal of developing a structure and procedures that would not only facilitate development of the coordinated plans, but also bring rural areas into the state's ongoing transportation planning activities.

DPIT was aided in its efforts to establish that rural planning infrastructure by its partner organizations, including the state-level Interagency Coordinating Committee on Transportation, the Illinois Association of Regional Councils, the Illinois Public Transportation Association, and the Illinois RTAC. These partners provided policy support and guidance to DPIT as the coordinated planning process was developed and implemented as well as technical assistance and resources to the rural planning regions that were charged with preparing the plans for their areas. These strong and productive partnerships are another key feature of the Illinois planning process.

Conducting the HSTP process in the context of ongoing coordination activities also strengthened DPIT's planning process. Prior to the establishment of the requirement for coordinated plans, agencies in Illinois had engaged in efforts to initiate and encourage transportation coordination, and DPIT

was able to take advantage of resources that were available because of those previous efforts to support its coordinated planning activities. One example is the Coordination Primer prepared for the ICCT and used for the development of Section 5311 projects; the Primer which presents a series of steps that can be followed by organizations wishing to plan coordinated transportation services, was used as a foundation for the HSTP process. DPIT also utilized the Illinois RTAC, which provides RTAP program technical assistance for DPIT and serves as the ICCT clearinghouse for coordination information, technical assistance, and outreach, as a source of technical assistance for the regional transportation planning groups. And, as mentioned above, the ICCT was a source of guidance for DPIT as HSTP plans were developed.

Finally, DPIT's ongoing support and assistance for the Regional Coordinators, many of whom were new to transportation planning, contributed to the quality of the planning process and the plans that were developed. DPIT's support included training sessions on coordinated planning requirements and developing plans, reviewing applications, and ranking projects.

Challenges

DPIT staff identified several aspects of the planning process that proved to be challenging:

- All of the Regional Coordinators needed to be hired in a short period of time. In addition, the Regional Coordinators brought varying levels of experience/professionalism to the HSTP process.
- One of the challenges for DPIT was working with other entities to ensure that non-traditional transportation stakeholders and the members of the targeted populations were included in the planning process and remained active participants. Additionally, this was the first time that an entity besides the DOT would be the first reviewer of applications. DPIT had to ensure that all materials were designed so that the regional coordinators would be able to accurately and fairly review applications and apply the evaluation criteria.
- Not all plans reflected the same level of stakeholder participation and sophistication.
- Not all of the stakeholders had access to electronic means of communication, which meant

that the distribution of information could not take place solely through the Internet.

Lessons Learned

- Hiring regional coordinators was essential as they assist with facilitating meetings and organizing and collecting data for each region on an on-going basis.
- It was very important to connect the existing agencies to an infrastructure that could be used for planning.
- Currently the state is evaluating each of the HSTPs in order to better understand where each region is in the planning process and what tools are needed to complete the process.
- In order to reach non-traditional transportation stakeholders, the RTC's will need to extend their outreach beyond existing contacts to ensure that all interested persons are involved in the planning process.
- Public outreach statewide was instrumental in getting "buy-in" for establishing the rural planning infrastructure.

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3.5 Mississippi Department of Transportation (MDOT)

Mississippi DOT is the designated recipient for statewide Section 5310 funding, as well as JARC and New Freedom funding for non-urbanized areas. The state's ten Planning and Development Districts each prepare their own coordinated plans, and MDOT is responsible for preparing a statewide coordinated plan. In addition to these three programs, the coordinated plans incorporate funding for senior and disability programs, Medicaid, and several other federal grant programs.

MDOT found the FTA coordinated human service planning requirements and accompanying funding to be a useful opportunity to devote resources to coordinating transportation services. Because human services and transportation providers had already been discussing coordination in recent years, there was very little of the types of resistance often encountered in coordinated planning processes. While stakeholder cooperation was certainly somewhat of a challenge, the human service and transportation providers were mostly ready to form positive working relationships. Human services agencies are not quite ready to relinquish control of their operations, but they recognize the opportunities and may be open to combining operations in the future.

Coordinated Planning Process

MDOT began with the United We Ride *Framework for Action*, holding quarterly meetings over an 18-month period, but found that this was insufficient for meeting the FTA requirements for developing coordinated plans. The agency was able to enlist the help of a team from Jackson State University to conduct a preliminary inventory of transportation services. Community planning sessions then helped to identify needs and strategies. Seven regional coordinated planning advisory groups and two statewide coordination summits were held to bring together human services and transportation providers and interested stakeholders.

Projects are selected through a series of decision cycles, with very similar criteria in each of the state's ten regions. Projects for JARC and Section 5311 are selected first, followed by projects for New Freedom and Section 5310. Applications are reviewed and projects selected by each region's Interagency Transportation Advisory Committee, whose members are stakeholders in the planning process. This ensures that the selection committee is most familiar with the needs and priorities of their district.

Future updates of the coordinated plans will take place every 2 years, concurrent with the state's ongoing transportation planning process.

Results to Date

As a result of strategies identified in the coordinated plans, MDOT has thus far funded several projects under Section 5311, including mobility management, integration and ITS demonstration

projects. These will be evaluated during the next coordinated planning process.

Delta Rides is an interagency mobility management effort being undertaken with cross-county cooperation in the Delta region. Although human services agencies continue to serve many of their own clients for now, most inter-county trips are made in Delta Rides-branded vehicles, with reservations and scheduling handled in a central call center. This arrangement is viewed by MDOT as the precursor to a single, efficient regional transit system.

An ITS workgroup has been formed to investigate small, low-cost options for improving vehicle coordination through real-time information and data transfers.

MDOT is working to establish regional transit centers to facilitate connections. The state aims to open a Regional Transportation Center to house joint maintenance and operations facilities.

Key Features

Notable elements of Mississippi's coordinated planning process include the conduct of statewide coordination summits to provide an opportunity for stakeholders to become involved in the process, the establishment of regional coordination planning advisory groups to provide guidance as plans are developed, and the state's advancement of mobility management projects following development of the coordinated plans.

Challenges

MDOT cites staff resources and stakeholder participation as significant challenges. Few local elected officials remained involved after realizing that the process did not involve large or highly visible projects. The level of effort required for outreach is potentially extraordinary compared to the amount of funding available. Additionally, despite a high level of interagency cooperation, Medicaid continues to operate through a brokerage and, while coordination efforts continue, this service has not been incorporated into the provider network.

Lessons Learned

The coordination summits and advisory groups worked well as a means of involving stakeholders in the development of coordinated plans. Interagency relationships have been greatly improved through

the coordinated planning process. However, elected officials are reluctant to become involved in low-profile efforts such as the coordination of transportation services.

The next coordinated planning process will include a detailed methodology for assessing needs, prioritizing projects, and obtaining performance data. MDOT is also pursuing automated systems to help with performance data collection and reporting, thereby freeing up staff time for planning efforts.

MDOT's mobility management effort has been slowed to some extent by the fact that the state's Medicaid agency, a key player in human services transportation, continues to operate a Medicaid brokerage system apart from any other coordinated transportation services. This remains an ongoing challenge.

MDOT has identified a number of items that would help to facilitate increased coordination, including guidance on known barriers to coordination, grant matching requirements, cost allocation practices, approaches to liability concerns, and sample operating agreements.

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3.6 Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT)

ODOT provides an example of a state DOT that assisted other entities with the development of coordinated plans for the state's Section 5310, JARC, and New Freedom funds for small urban and non-urbanized areas. In addition to interviews with ODOT staff, this case study draws on information contained in *Assessment of Oregon Coordinated Transportation Plans: Final Report* completed in June 2008 by Nelson/Nygaard Consulting Associates for ODOT and the Association of Oregon Counties (7). For a copy of the entire document, go to <http://www.oregon.gov/ODOT/PT/index.shtml>.

Coordinated Planning Process

ODOT's Public Transit Division incorporates the SAFETEA-LU requirements for coordinated public transit-human services transportation plans into its

existing statewide transportation planning process. ODOT does not directly prepare any coordinated plans. The state has a Special Transportation Fund (STF) which includes its own requirements and organizational infrastructure for local planning efforts. Forty two entities throughout the state are designated as “STF Agencies” and include transit districts, counties where there is no transit district, and Indian tribal governments. Rather than requiring local agencies to create additional plans to satisfy SAFETEA-LU requirements, ODOT decided to incorporate the federal coordinated planning requirements into the existing statewide STF planning process.

ODOT previously required STF Agencies to prepare a plan to guide the investment of STF funds to maximize the benefit to the elderly and people with disabilities within each STF area. In June 2006, ODOT informed the STF Agencies that the new federal coordinated planning requirements would be integrated into the existing STF planning process, for the development of a single document, referred to as a “Coordinated Plan.” ODOT distributed a template with instructions and notified STF Agencies that coordinated plans were required to be adopted and submitted to ODOT by June 30, 2007 in order to qualify for federal and state grant funding. Coordinated plans would be used to qualify for the state’s STF funds as well as federal funds under the Section 5310, JARC, and New Freedom programs.

ODOT entered into an intergovernmental agreement with the Association of Oregon Counties (AOC), a statewide government association that views transportation issues as one of its responsibilities. The AOC hired a team of consultants that were made available to STF Agencies at no cost to the STF Agencies. The coordinated planning effort was largely paid for by federal Section 5311 funds. The AOC staff and consulting team were tasked with the “heavy lifting” in the planning process, while ODOT provided advisory assistance. While some STF Agencies created their coordinated plans in-house, many utilized the planning assistance made available through the AOC and ODOT. The AOC and its consultants offered to provide assistance to STF Agencies in the following tasks: assistance and leadership for the public involvement processes; gathering and analyzing data; facilitating needs identification and prioritization; writing the draft plan; gathering and analyzing comments regarding the draft plan; and finalizing the plan for adoption by the STF Agency. STF Agencies were required to

assign staff to assist the AOC planners throughout the planning process.

Results to Date

All 42 STF Agencies submitted draft plans by the June 2007 deadline. Some STF Agencies worked with others to combine their coordinated planning efforts into one document encompassing both planning areas. Currently every STF Agency has a locally adopted plan except for some Indian tribes who have not yet adopted their plans.

An evaluation of the adopted plans concluded in summer 2008 and the second phase of the coordinated planning process began in July 2008. This phase focused on the improvement and enhancement of the first round of coordinated plans.

Key Features

The coordinated planning process as implemented in Oregon offers several unique and/or useful features that may be of interest to other state DOTs. They include the following:

- ODOT found a great partner in the AOC because the AOC had economic development planners in regions throughout the state. ODOT discovered that these economic development planners had good local knowledge and networks of contacts in the individual STF Agency areas that were valuable during the coordinated planning process.
- ODOT issued a planning guidance document to STF Agencies at the outset of the planning process that included a summary of the new federal requirements and the process that ODOT would use to meet those requirements. The guidance included instructions on how STF Agencies could utilize the consulting services through the AOC. It also included a Coordinated Plan document template.
- ODOT, the AOC, and the AOC consultants prepared a plan assessment matrix to indicate the extent to which each coordinated plan addressed basic planning elements identified through SAFETEA-LU or ODOT guidelines, such as public outreach, stakeholder consultation, and identification of strategies, among other requirements.
- Information from the coordinated plans has been used to create a summary of statewide

gaps and needs that will become a part of a statewide public transportation plan.

Sample materials used by ODOT in its coordinated planning process can be found in Appendix C. They include the following:

- Overview of Coordinated Human Services Public Transportation Plan Implementation;
- Coordinated Plan Template and Instructions; and
- Coordinated Plan Evaluation Matrix and Plan Assessment Guide (from *Assessment of Oregon Coordinated Transportation Plans: Final Report* completed in June 2008 by Nelson\Nygaard Consulting Associates for ODOT and the Association of Oregon Counties).

Challenges

ODOT identified several aspects of the process of developing the first round of coordinated plans that were challenging for the DOT and the STF agencies.

Oregon Tribal governments are new to transit and to transportation planning and ODOT has had difficulty getting the process organized with those entities. Some have not yet adopted their plans, and ODOT has withheld funding from those tribes until adoption occurs.

Most of the STF Agencies do not have dedicated planning staff or access to planning tools such as Geographic Information System (GIS) technology to analyze U.S. Census data and prepare maps to illustrate existing target populations and transportation services or unmet transportation needs. ODOT and the AOC were able to provide support to the STF Agencies, but lack of staff and other resources was still an obstacle to the development of detailed coordinated plans.

In dealing with these challenges, the partnership with the AOC and the consulting services that were provided at no cost to the STF Agencies were vital. More familiarity with the new process as a result of experience with the development of the first coordinated plans will also help all entities involved to successfully update the plans in the future. Since 2007 was the first year of this process, ODOT was proud that all 42 STF Agencies were able to complete their coordinated plans.

Lessons Learned

Following the development of the first round of coordinated plans in 2006 and 2007, ODOT con-

ducted an evaluation of the process and the resulting plans. The evaluation identified a number of areas in which plans could be improved or enhanced. Those areas are the focus for the second phase of Oregon's coordinated planning process, which is currently underway. They include the following:

- **Expanded stakeholder involvement and public participation.** Most of the STF Agencies relied on existing advisory committees, which represent transportation providers and persons with disabilities and/or seniors, to provide input as coordinated plans were developed. As plans are updated, more effort will be made to include organizations that can provide information about the transportation needs of persons with low income, and other transportation stakeholders. More active and varied public outreach efforts and opportunities for interested parties to become involved, and more complete documentation of the methods used to engage stakeholders and the public—and their results—will be other areas of focus. Some agencies took a creative approach to outreach and were very successful. For example, Malheur County, Oregon, and Payette County, Idaho, used a local Boy Scout troop to distribute surveys, inserted surveys into utility bills, and awarded a restaurant gift certificate to survey respondents. Their efforts resulted in the completion of over 600 surveys by members of the public.
- **A more consistent approach to the identification of service gaps and other unmet transportation needs.** Although ODOT provided the STF Agencies with a coordinated plan outline that included guidance for completing each section, plans described transportation service gaps and needs in varying levels of detail. Ideally, updated plans will identify both unique and shared transportation needs for the three target populations, and will document needs that exist beyond what is addressed by current transportation services.
- **Greater use of demographic data, maps, photos, and other visual materials.** One way to strengthen the documentation of transportation needs is to analyze census data and to map target populations, existing services, and activity centers. Many of the STF Agencies will need further assistance to make use of these methods in their updated plans.

- **Stronger connections between identified transportation needs and proposed strategies.** Following a clearer determination of unmet transportation needs, updated plans should include proposed strategies to address those specific needs. More thorough documentation of the work done with planning partners and stakeholders to identify needs and develop strategies may help lead to strategies that address particular needs more directly. In addition, the availability of federal funds through ODOT presents an opportunity to implement new transportation services, so strategies need not be limited to the continuation of existing services.
- **Inclusion of a wider range of transportation strategies to address service gaps and needs.** As coordinated plans are updated, the STF Agencies will be encouraged to think more creatively about potential solutions to transportation service gaps, and to include a number of different strategies rather than depending on one or two.

Despite the identified need to make some elements of the coordinated plans stronger, ODOT feels that the SAFETEA-LU coordinated plan requirements fit in nicely and actually improve the planning process that previously existed within the state. ODOT is proud of the fact that the STF Agencies were able to complete the coordinated plans within a short timeline and with limited guidance, and looks forward to seeing the plans improve in quality in future years.

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3.7 South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT)

South Carolina’s coordinated planning effort attempts to leverage available resources to the greatest extent possible, using any savings realized by

altering redundant services to address gaps in service. This process necessarily results in greatly increased inter-agency and public-private coordination and collaboration.

Coordinated Planning Process

In addition to Section 5310 funds, SCDOT is the designated recipient for JARC and New Freedom funds for small urban and non-urbanized areas. SCDOT appointed the state’s ten regional Councils of Government (COGs) as Regional Coordination Bodies and charged them with the development of the coordinated plans at the regional level.

Selection of the COGs as the lead agency in each region for the coordinated planning process offered several advantages. Since each COG also serves as its region’s Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), this approach ensures that all regional plans meet the relevant requirements and integrate with both short- and long-range transportation plans. Coordinated plans will be updated on the same schedules as those other plans. The process and format of the plans is the same in all regions, which helps facilitate inter-agency coordination and integration, but defining “local” on a regional basis allows each region to determine its own needs and identify the strategies that could best address those needs.

SCDOT’s role in the coordinated planning process is one of oversight and guidance to the COGs. As such, SCDOT provides policy direction, modeling, data collection and technical and financial assistance, and fosters coordination between COGs. SCDOT not only developed the coordinated plan outline to be followed across regions, but also obtained the support of a consultant for each region to assist with outreach activities and plan development. The agency also encouraged public involvement by organizing stakeholder meetings and forums, serving on committees, and acting as a liaison between human service agencies, COGs and designated recipients.

The coordinated plans were developed through a stakeholder-driven process, including COG-selected representatives of public, private and non-profit transportation and human service providers. SCDOT felt it was important for agencies and stakeholders to feel welcome and inclined to participate fully. SCDOT, as well as each COG, held focus groups, conducted surveys, and utilized community planning sessions to gather input.

In addition to sections 5310, 5316, and 5317, South Carolina’s coordinated plans incorporated

dozens of government programs, including Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Workforce Investment Act (WIA), Vocational Rehabilitation, Medicaid, Community Action (CAP), Independent Living Centers, Disabilities and Special Needs, and Administration on Aging (AoA) programs. Other public, private and non-profit transportation providers were also considered.

Elements of the ten regional plans were combined to form a statewide coordinated plan, which was integrated into the latest Statewide Transit Plan, part of South Carolina's Comprehensive Multimodal Transportation Plan.

Selection Process

The application and selection process for Sections 5310, 5316, and 5317 varies by region, but is based on a standard set of criteria. The selection process considers how well each project takes advantage of the identified opportunities for increased coordination, elimination of redundancies and filling of gaps, both regionally and statewide.

Projects are developed within each region by human service and transportation providers and evaluated by the COG for that region. Selection criteria are the same for all three federal programs. Projects are evaluated for their level of interagency coordination, mix of matching funds, cost effectiveness and consistency with the regional coordinated plan goals. Additional criteria include the applicant's ability to sustain the project, financial and managerial capacity, internal evaluation plan, targeted populations and geographic distribution of funding and services.

SCDOT expects to clarify the selection process responsibilities of each party in the coordination committees in order to minimize confusion among stakeholders.

Results to Date

The immediate result of the coordinated planning process in South Carolina was the development of ten regional plans and a statewide plan for FY 2007. Each region's coordinated plan has been incorporated into its Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), and will be updated concurrently with that plan in the future.

Coordination planning has led to other achievements in South Carolina.

Although aided significantly by the reversal of the previous position that other federal funds could

not be used to match FTA funds, coordination efforts began in South Carolina prior to the passage of SAFETEA-LU in 2005. Much attention was focused on a 2007 report by the Clemson University Transportation Systems Team, *Barriers and Catalysts for Statewide Coordination of Transportation Services*. This report highlighted opportunities to create a more efficient and effective transportation network.

Recognizing inefficiencies and redundancies, transit and human services agencies desired a more coordinated approach that would maximize the value of limited resources. In many cases, human services agencies saw opportunities to cease providing transportation and devote those funds toward their core mission. By working together and combining services, they were able to trim waiting lists for core services and spend more money on existing clients.

One of the most significant achievements of South Carolina's coordinated planning effort has been the establishment of a Mobility Management Center by the Lower Savannah COG to handle passenger requests for information, appointments, scheduling and dispatching, and the agency's plan to implement ITS technologies to improve vehicle coordination. More passenger trips are now taken while vehicle miles continue to decline. Funding comes primarily from a SCDOT pilot grant, and social services agencies and transportation providers are able to free up revenue for other priorities.

Key Features

A unique feature of South Carolina's coordinated plans is the inclusion of a number of funding sources besides the three required FTA programs in the coordinated plans. Following the lead of the federal United We Ride initiative, which identified over 60 federal programs that support transportation services in one form or another, SCDOT encouraged the participation of representatives of a wide array of human services agencies in the coordinated planning process. In addition to the Section 5310, 5316, and 5317 programs, programs covered by the South Carolina plans include the Section 5307 and 5311 programs, Medicaid, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Workforce Investment Act (WIA), Community Action Programs, independent living centers, and AoA programs.

Other key characteristics of the coordinated planning process in South Carolina is the centralized

guidance and assistance from SCDOT and the incorporation of the coordinated plans into other transportation planning efforts.

SCDOT provided support from a consultant for each of the COGs and regional planning groups to help with outreach activities and plan development.

SCDOT also developed a consistent plan outline and content to be used by each region. In addition, each region will utilize similar selection criteria, based on a template provided by SCDOT and tailored to the specific needs of the region, to choose projects that will receive funding.

The format and horizon of the regional coordinated plans, which are uniform across the state, are intended to facilitate coordination with long-range transportation plans. Coordinated plans will be updated when long-range transportation plans are revised.

Challenges

As did many other state DOTs that responded to the survey conducted as part of this research, SCDOT found staff time constraints to be an obstacle to the development of coordinated plans. Other challenges included the following:

- Unfamiliarity at the regional level with the stakeholders that should be involved in coordinated planning efforts and/or the issues associated with human service transportation,
- Obtaining the participation of stakeholders,
- Lack of understanding on the part of some state agencies about the coordinated planning requirements, and
- Coordination of the new coordinated planning process with other statewide transportation planning processes.

SCDOT also found it difficult to keep up with changing coordinated planning requirements. Since these were new requirements, FTA issued guidance periodically, sometimes without much notice, after the coordinated planning process began. To mitigate this challenge, SCDOT staff kept in frequent communication with FTA liaisons to ensure that all regulations and guidance were being properly followed. This was often difficult, with regulations and guidance being published periodically after the coordination process began, and required large amounts of staff time.

The process of coordinating transportation services is also not without challenges. Many real and

perceived barriers have led agencies to resist coordination, which causes them to unnecessarily duplicate transportation services. Perhaps the most significant issue was the lack of education and awareness regarding opportunities to coordinate services and funding sources. Prior to the coordination committee meetings, few agencies had even considered collaborating with others, and many even equated it with staff reductions. The mixing of clients is sometimes a significant issue, as clients often have special needs specific to a certain provider.

The geography of the state has been a challenge for longer trips. Many low-income people travel long distances to work in resort areas, while medical needs are often very far from patients' homes. County-based transit services can cause fragmentation, but increased coordination and opportunities for inter-agency transfers have improved access while using fewer vehicles with larger loads. Greater improvements are expected in this area as statewide coordination efforts continue.

Lessons Learned

Coordination efforts in South Carolina began before the new federal requirements for coordinated planning. To implement the new requirements, a consistent process was developed for use in all regions. Despite the use of a standardized plan format, each region produced a plan to reflect its own circumstances, priorities, and programs and initiatives, and many good existing coordination practices were folded into the resulting plans.

Stakeholder agencies were happy to participate in the process once they understood the potential for real resource savings. However, SCDOT recognizes a need to better inform staff and stakeholders about their responsibilities in future rounds of the planning process.

While transportation needs and strategies for addressing them varied considerably from region to region, a number of common categories of need were identified. They include the following:

- Higher levels of service—expanded service days, hours, and geographic areas;
- Mobility options for low-income individuals who do not qualify for TANF or Medicaid assistance;
- Access to jobs in other counties or regions;
- Shorter response times for return demand response trips;

- Lower capital costs;
- Improved availability of information about transportation services; and
- Increased use of existing services.

In addition, SCDOT learned that mobility management strategies and improved access to information about transportation services were discussed in every region.

Guidance about the coordinated planning requirements evolved gradually, so it was important to maintain regular contact with FTA liaisons. This allowed SCDOT to keep up with the “moving target” of guidance and regulations while receiving feedback throughout its implementation of the process.

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3.8 Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT)

This case study describes the guidance, support, and technical assistance provided by TxDOT to local Steering Committees in regions across the state as they developed coordinated plans.

Coordinated Planning Process

Chapter 461 of the Texas State Transportation Code addresses the benefit of coordination of transportation services. In response to the requirements set forth in the Code, the Texas Transportation Commission established the Regional Planning and Public Transportation Study Group (Study Group). The mission of the Study Group was “to review current public transportation planning and programming practices within metropolitan, suburban, and rural areas and to enhance service delivery, customer satisfaction, efficiency and effectiveness” (8). In addition, the Study Group suggested to TxDOT that the coordinated planning process, as required by SAFETEA-LU, be conducted at the local level, rather than as a statewide initiative. The Study Group proposed dividing the state into 24 local planning

regions, based on COG boundaries, and that each region locally appoint a “lead agency” to direct the planning process.

TxDOT chose this method in an effort to keep the coordinated planning process at the grassroots level. Stakeholders included local transit agencies, COGs, regional and local planning commissions, consumers, and health and human services agencies. In most cases, regional stakeholders designated the COG, Metropolitan Planning Agency (MPO), or some other community council as their lead agency, although in three cases, the local transit provider was designated.

Results to Date

The planning processes for FY 2007 and FY 2008 have been completed, with all 24 regions submitting plans that were adopted locally, each by their respective Steering Committee. Recent plans and supporting documents can be downloaded at http://www.regionalserviceplanning.org/texas_regions/plans_presentations/.

Lead agencies are preparing to start the FY 2009 planning process. The coordinated plans are used in the decision process for award of federal grants, including Section 5310, 5316, and 5317. A condition of federal funding is that the proposal must be included in the coordinated plan. Since the locally developed planning processes have begun in Texas, there has been a marked increase in federal funding applications.

Key Features

Even though the coordinated plans were developed at a local level, TxDOT played a major role in the process through guidance, technical assistance, and funding. Since the beginning of the process, TxDOT has devoted considerable time, effort, and staff resources to the support of the local regions.

The planning process in each region is funded through a combination of federal and state money. Regions have access to federal Section 5304 State-wide Planning funds, as well as money from the state highway fund. The federal funds can be used to fund up to 80% of planning activities; the local share is 20%.

TxDOT also defined the parameters for designating a lead agency and provided general guidance on what should be included in each regional coordinated plan, although each region was generally encouraged

to draft a plan that would be appropriate to their needs (a draft plan and plan outline was also made available on the planning website).

Each lead agency is required to do the following:

- Appoint a Steering Committee, representing a broad spectrum of regional stakeholders, including but not limited to transit agencies, workforce representatives, human service agencies, and the general public. The Steering Committees are responsible for providing ongoing encouragement, input, and guidance and, ultimately, for adopting the coordination plan. There is no requirement with regard to how often a Steering Committee must meet.
- Designate a project manager to oversee the planning process.

The coordinated plan must include the following components:

- An outline of how the region will leverage other resources and sustain programs with or without the availability of state and/or federal funding.
- A public involvement plan.
- With particular emphasis in this planning year—a strategy for engaging Health and Human Services agencies. Lead agencies were reminded by TxDOT that the coordinated plan is meant to specifically address human services needs. There has always been coordination among transit providers in the state, but not between transit providers and human services providers.

Lead agencies, with assistance from their Steering Committees, are responsible for drafting a coordinated plan every other year. In addition to the locally drafted plan, lead agencies must submit an annual work plan to TxDOT. The annual work plan must identify the goals, objectives, activities, and participants in the plan, in both table and narrative form, and describe how work done as part of the annual work plan aligns with the broader goals of the coordinated plan. TxDOT also requires quarterly progress reports measuring progress toward the annual work plan.

With the assistance of the Texas Transportation Institute (TTI), TxDOT also established, and currently maintains, an extensive technical assistance website (www.regionalserviceplanning.org)

to provide ongoing support to the 24 regions throughout the planning process. The website's home page provides the most up-to-date information about workshops, regional forums, and local and national coordination news. Within the website, there is an extensive list of resources, divided into four primary sections: Coordination Clearinghouse, Maintenance Clearinghouse, Texas Regions, and Contact Us. The Coordination Clearinghouse is especially relevant to this discussion. The structure and content is as follows:

Coordination Clearinghouse

- Documents:
 - Practices in Other States;
 - Published Reports (from various sources including TxDOT, FTA, TTI, TRB, and Interagency Transportation Coordinating Council on Access and Mobility);
 - Federal and State Rules and Legislation; and
 - Supplemental Documents (including a Coordinated Regional Public Transportation Plan Outline (draft), prepared by the Study Group, TxDOT, TTI, and regional representatives).
- Presentations: Clearinghouse for presentations from various regions and meetings related to coordination activities in Texas.
- Workshops: Information from Regional Planning and Public Transportation Coordination workshops held throughout the state.
- White Papers: Discussion and research papers addressing issues revolving around coordination.
- Barriers and Constraints: Forms provided for download to collect information from providers on barriers, constraints, and best practices. Information is assembled and aggregated at the regional level, then posted on the website.
- Related Links: Links to the websites of national, state, and sponsor programs like the Transit Cooperative Research Program (TCRP), United We Ride, and TTI.
- Online Community
 - Listserv: E-mail newsletter/alerts for the Regional Service Planning Group (anyone can sign up).
 - Web board: A web-based bulletin board used to discuss issues such as accessibility, transit safety, and best practices.

Several of the items available on the coordination clearinghouse website may also be found in Appendix D. They include:

- Coordination Plan FAQ;
- Sample plan outline; and
- Best practices form.

TxDOT has experienced numerous successes as a result of the coordinated planning processes throughout the state.

Challenges

This is not to say that TxDOT did not find aspects of the planning process challenging. One of the biggest challenges faced by TxDOT was how to engage and coordinate with human services agencies. In many cases, TxDOT and the lead agencies were unaware that particular health and human services agencies were in existence. Some of the questions asked by TxDOT staff in this regard were: Who are these agencies? What are their needs? Who do they serve? Who do we contact? Because human services agencies are truly at the heart of the coordinated plan, TxDOT is particularly concerned with identifying and involving as many human serviced agencies as possible in a meaningful manner.

To overcome this obstacle, 10 regional meetings were held across the state to open dialogue between transit providers and health and human services agencies. TxDOT initiated the forums and secured and paid for professional meeting facilitators to provide guidance and training to lead agencies, who then were responsible for contacting and inviting local stakeholders to the meetings and for conducting the meetings. Participants included TxDOT staff, the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (as well as their sister agencies), and regional stakeholders. TxDOT felt that these meetings were a major success, as a catalyst for the planning process and the beginning of an era of coordination.

Other challenges to the planning process include the following:

- **Limited staff capacity:** A comprehensive planning process requires a large investment of both staff time and agency money, and different regions had more or less capacity to provide the necessary resources.
- **Conflicting agency jurisdiction:** In some cases there was a question as to which agency was responsible for which client. In other cases,

agencies were unwilling to cross jurisdictional boundaries to provide continuity of service.

- **Paradigm surrounding transportation:** For many years, the traditional focus of transportation had been on operations, but the planning process requires consensus building and relationship development between unrelated agencies.

TxDOT is meeting these challenges through ongoing support of the local planning regions. They recognize that changes do not happen overnight and are willing to support local planning regions as they work towards their coordination goals. Some of their biggest assets in the processes have been the regions themselves who have, as a result of the planning process, taken steps to hire staff specifically charged with regional transportation coordination. TxDOT commends the regions for being creative about funding new positions, even during tough economic times.

Lessons Learned

TxDOT is not planning any immediate changes to their coordinated planning process. The local approach has worked well for them, as it has generated support at many levels—from grassroots back to the state. Providing funding to the local agencies specifically for the coordinated planning process was key to their success. Additionally, TxDOT staff indicated that it was important for them, and in turn their planning regions, to be realistic about their goals and what is achievable. The measured and methodical approach to planning, through guidance from the Study Group; extensive professional, technical guidance; quarterly progress reports; and annual work plans allowed the local planning regions to meet and exceed the coordination planning requirements set out by the Texas State Transportation Code and SAFETEA-LU.

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3.9 Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT)

Wisconsin provides an example of a state in which coordinated plans are prepared by counties, with significant technical assistance and support provided by WisDOT.

Coordinated Planning Process

In Wisconsin, counties are the recipients of state and federal funds for human services transportation. In 2005, with the passage of SAFETEA-LU, projects funded through federal grant programs Section 5310, JARC, and New Freedom (through the Wisconsin Employment Transportation Assistance Program, or WETAP, which combines federal and state funds) had to be part of a “locally developed coordinated public-transit human services transportation plan” to receive funding. In 2006, using the United We Ride assessment tool *Framework for Action: Building the Fully Coordinated Transportation System (9)*, WisDOT developed a coordinated planning process that included an assessment of existing transit services, needs, and gaps. At that time, “local,” for coordinated planning purposes, was defined as “county.” WisDOT felt strongly that all county residents should have an equal opportunity to be part of the assessment and planning process. Because of this belief, a broader base of stakeholders was invited to participate in the process.

The 2006 process was coordinated and facilitated by nine Regional Planning Commissions (RPC) covering 66 counties. WisDOT coordinated and conducted the meetings in those counties that were not represented by an RPC. WisDOT chose the RPC planners for the meeting process because they would be viewed as neutral and objective by stakeholders, and because it would give the RPC planners an opportunity to learn about specialized transit services in the counties they served. WisDOT defined the requirements of the coordination plan and the required nine documents to be submitted as part of the plan. WisDOT added the county coordination plan meetings to the RPC Workplan for 2006.

In support of the 2006 county coordination planning process, WisDOT provided orientation and developed a toolkit to help the RPC planners coordinate the county meetings and develop the county coordination plans. The Toolkit provided forms, worksheets, and resource information for the RPC planners, including:

- A list of nine documents required as part of the County Plan submittals;
- *Framework for Action* Assessment Tool and Facilitator’s Guide;
- Templates for all documents related to the county meetings and the coordinated plan;
- Invitation contact lists for the county meetings, including state and federal grant recipients, local/state government organizations, advocacy groups, and WisDOT; and
- Background and reference information: program summaries, contact information for RPCs/MPOs, presentations from facilitator trainings, and *Framework for Action* assessments for other states.

At the completion of the 2006 planning process, 70 of 72 counties had conducted county coordination meetings, and completed and submitted county coordination plans to WisDOT. However, follow-up on county plan implementation 9 months later indicated that more than 40 counties had made no progress toward plan implementation since the 2006 county meeting. Many county respondents indicated their belief that WisDOT and/or the RPC planners “owned” the coordinated plans and were responsible for plan implementation. Not surprisingly, rural counties have limited personnel and resources to dedicate to transportation coordination, and often transportation coordination is a small percentage of the overall job duties of the person assigned to the task. Though interested in commencing the plan implementation process, rural counties lacked the human resources to do so.

Although there was a lack of initiative for plan implementation by some counties during the initial county planning process, there was still a considerable increase in federal grant applications between 2006 and 2008 (see Figure 2). This increase can be attributed to the federal and state grant program overviews that were part of the county meeting agenda in 2006. Another success of the county coordination meetings was attendance by non-traditional stakeholders who learned how state and federal funds are distributed in their counties, and how local matching funds for grant dollars are allocated by county boards. Some of the counties officially adopted their coordinated plan, while others did not. In some cases, county boards required the plans be adopted. WisDOT considered the “adoption date” to be the date the county coordination meetings were held.

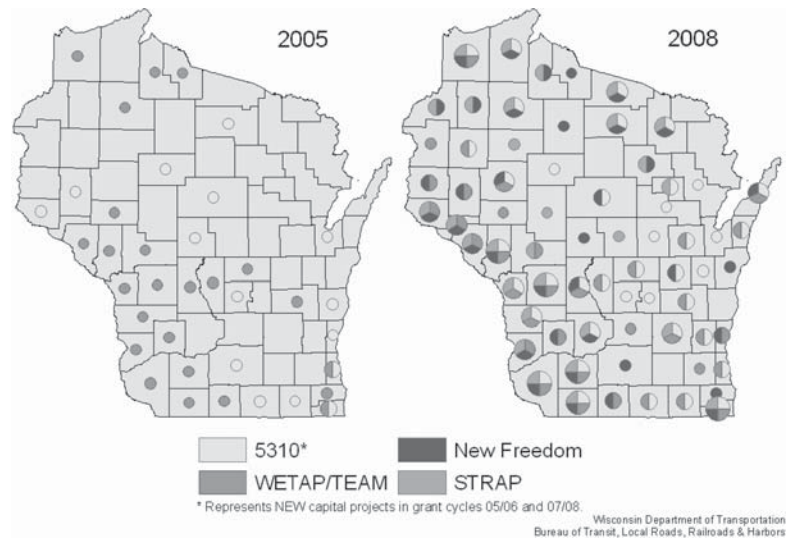


Figure 2 Increased participation in specialized transportation assistance programs, by county, 2005–2008.

After FTA issued the guidance for the JARC and New Freedom programs, and after reviewing “lessons learned” from the 2006 process, WisDOT convened a workgroup of RPC planners to develop a new coordination planning process for 2008. The updated process focused on creating buy-in and ownership of the coordination plans to increase implementation of plan strategies and action items. This time around, the workgroup did not specifically define “local,” but left the decision up to the entities submitting coordination plans. For the 2008 process “local” could mean “urban area,” “county,” “multi-county,” or “region.” Furthermore, the workgroup felt if buy-in and plan ownership for implementation were to be achieved, the role of WisDOT could not be one of micro-manager. The role of the RPC planners changed from coordinator to consultant for the coordination meetings and plan process. The RPC planners’ primary tasks were to provide demographic and mapping information to the county/multi-county/regions that were conducting the meetings, although in some instances, the RPC planners did facilitate planning meetings.

The 2008 process was developed so that coordination plans would remain current for a 4- to 5-year period. This timeframe was chosen to tie into the planning and reporting requirements of RPCs and MPOs. WisDOT funded the administrative costs of the 2008 meetings by paying for meeting space, printing, newspaper notices, postage, and refreshments.

A 2008 Toolkit was also developed specifically for the local meeting coordinators. The 2008 Toolkit was similar to the previous version in that it provided guidance, document templates, worksheets, and information sources. In addition, the revised Toolkit contained the following sections:

- A section explaining the purpose and elements of the coordinated plan as required by SAFETEA-LU;
- Links to lists of WisDot projects that were approved and funded for 2008;
- Links to grant applications, with explanations of federal funding programs;
- A list of information needed to identify gaps and needs;
- A Wisconsin Coordination Model;
- A Coordination Strategy Handbook;
- Additional sample plans from other states; and
- Samples of consultant summaries of Supplemental Transportation Rural Assistance Program (STRAP) Planning Grants.

WisDOT hired a national consulting firm, Nelson\Nygaard Consulting Associates, to develop the Wisconsin Model of Coordination (listed above). The model included the development of a coordination planning tool called the *Coordination Strategy Handbook (10)* that was to be used as a resource for a wide variety of coordination strategies during the 2008 coordinated planning process. The handbook

highlights individual strategies that have been successfully used by coordination committees in urban, suburban, and rural areas. A copy of the *Coordination Strategy Handbook* is available at: <http://www.dot.wisconsin.gov/localgov/docs/kit08-nygaard-handbook.pdf>. The full Toolkit is available online at: <http://www.dot.wisconsin.gov/localgov/transit/toolkit.htm>.

In addition, over the past 18 months, WisDOT has conducted regular Q&A sessions between transit program managers and local, county, and non-profit agency grant applicants. During these transit conference calls and face-to-face meetings, counties/local regions/non-profit agencies can ask questions about grant programs or request examples of successful approaches to planning and coordination strategies. In addition, RPC planners have continued to provide localities with significant consultation and, in three regions, are the facilitators of a multi-county transportation coordination team.

WisDOT has also provided counties with an incentive for county/multi-county/regions to work together. If three or more counties conducted meetings together, WisDOT's Human Services Transportation Coordination Program Manager and one or two other federal or state grant program managers would attend the local meetings to provide information on the 2008 coordination planning process and Transit 101, which included a federal and state grant program overview. In some instances, meetings conducted at a multi-county level led to plan preparation of a multi-county plan, while in other cases, single counties participated in regional meetings, but prepared their own individual county plans. WisDOT views these multi-county meetings as a success, as networking with peer counties can be the beginning of future multi-county/regional plans.

Results to Date

The 2008 coordinated planning process (for FY 2009 funding) was set to be completed by November 2008. To date, 70 coordinated plans have been submitted to WisDOT. Federal grant applications for New Freedom, WETAP, and STRAP programs are in review, and grant awards were expected to be released by December 15, 2008. Federal Section 5310 runs on a 2-year grant cycle, so applications for the next round of funding are due in February 2010.

WisDOT chose to focus New Freedom grant dollars on funding Mobility Management positions throughout the state. For 2008, 19 mobility managers

were hired with New Freedom funding. In response to the overwhelming training needs of the new mobility managers, WisDOT contracted with a national consultant on mobility management and developed a Mobility Manager training program. The program includes four, two-day training sessions, ongoing conference calls, and a Google blog for mobility managers to network and share information with each other.

WisDOT and local stakeholders have seen ongoing success as a result of the highly developed planning process. There has been a marked increase in applications for funding through the relevant federal and state grant programs and local and non-traditional stakeholders have become more informed about specialized transit funding and transportation coordination. In addition, counties and local entities have come to realize the value of RPCs as an asset in moving coordination forward in their areas.

Another coordination effort is proceeding in Wisconsin along with the process of developing and updating coordinated plans. In 2005, the state's governor established the Inter-Agency Council on Transportation Coordination (ICTC) as a body to lead coordination efforts for the state. Members of the ICTC include all state agencies that play a role in the provision of transportation service, including the following agencies:

- Office of the Commissioner of Insurance;
- Department of Health and Human Services (representing Department of Aging, Medicaid, Medicaid Infrastructure Grants, Physical Disabilities);
- Department of Workforce Development (representing the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and WETAP);
- Department of Transportation; and
- Department of Veterans Affairs.

The ICTC formed a Stakeholder Advisory Committee (SAC) charged with the task of reviewing ICTC products and offering comment and recommendations. The SAC is comprised of transit providers, county aging offices, aging and disability advocacy organizations, Wisconsin Counties Association, consumers, and eight tribal nations.

The ICTC is developing a report to the governor summarizing the statewide coordination activities for the past 3 years and implementation recommendations based on the Wisconsin Model of Coordination. The report was submitted to the governor in November 2008.

Key Features

The Toolkits developed for both the 2006 and 2008 planning seasons were important to WisDOT's success in generating local participation and in completing 70 coordinated plans. Both Toolkits provided step-by-step instructions, not only on the planning process itself, with helpful tips and document templates, but also on each of the elements required to be addressed in the local plan. As noted above, the 2008 Toolkit is available online at: <http://www.dot.wisconsin.gov/localgov/transit/toolkit.htm>.

The 2006 Toolkit is no longer available online, but a copy may be obtained by contacting Bobbie Beson-Crone, Human Services Transportation Coordination Program Manager at: bobbie.beson-crone@dot.state.wi.us.

Challenges

The biggest challenge faced by WisDOT during the 2006 coordinated plan process was the failure of counties to "own" their coordination plans. As previously discussed, 97% of counties successfully prepared and submitted coordinated plans to WisDOT, but only 57% of those counties locally adopted and took action on their coordination plans. The other 43% believed either WisDOT or the RPC was responsible for implementation of their county coordinated plan, or they did not have sufficient human resources to implement the plan.

WisDOT responded to this challenge by teaming with the RPC planners to develop a new planning process for 2008. The role of the RPCs changed from *coordinators* of the planning process to *consultants* to the process. Local entities were responsible for the meeting coordination and implementation of the coordination plan. WisDOT prepared an updated Toolkit to provide detailed guidance to local entities as they convened and conducted meetings and made other efforts to develop their coordination plans. The Toolkit included a presentation outlining the local entities' role and new responsibilities.

For the 2006 and 2008 processes, many stakeholders who attended the local meetings had little knowledge about where specialized transit funding comes from and how it is allocated. Every county in Wisconsin receives operational assistance for specialized transportation (elderly and persons with disabilities) through a formula grant based on county population of elderly and persons with disabilities. Stakeholders attending meetings were unaware of the availability of state and federal grants, and the amount

or allocation funding process in their local area. WisDOT worked diligently to bring counties and regions up-to-date on funding availability and the coordinated planning process required as part of that funding.

During both processes, meeting attendance by local, county, and public officials and consumers was low because of the difficulty in scheduling meetings at a time when most people could take off work or were generally available.

Lessons Learned

The method of providing extensive technical assistance to counties/regions/private non-profit agencies has worked well for WisDOT and will continue. The Toolkits strongly contributed to the success realized in Wisconsin. To assist in the provision of in-depth technical support, WisDOT would recommend the following actions be taken by other DOTs:

- Define a DOT transit team comprised of state and federal grant program managers to consult and provide guidance to counties and regions on grant policies and application requirements.
- Team with the RPC's and MPO's to assist counties/regions in obtaining demographic and mapping data to assist in assessing existing transit services, needs, gaps, and in developing a coordination plan to address those unmet needs.

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3.10 Conclusions

Table 2 summarizes key points from the preceding descriptions of the experiences of the mini-case study sites as they implemented the SAFETEA-LU

Table 2 Mini-case study summary

State DOT	Plan(s) Prepared by	Funding Programs Covered by Coordinated Plans					Other	Challenges	Lessons Learned
		Section 5310	Section 5316 (JARC), Small Urban Areas (50,000–199,999)	Section 5316, Non-urbanized Areas (<50,000)	Section 5317 (New Freedom), Small Urban Areas (50,000–199,999)	Section 5317, Non-urbanized Areas (<50,000)			
Alaska	Local communities	•	•	•	•	•	Alaska Mental Health Trust (capital and operating projects)	Defining terms—“local”, “strategy”; staff time constraints; limited funding to support planning; developing plans in very remote areas with little potential for coordination	Newly formed coordination groups often developed more creative plans than established groups; requiring local bodies to legally adopt their plans strengthened public participation and brought elected officials into the process
Connecticut	Regional Planning Organizations ConnDOT (in two large urbanized areas)	•	•	•	•	•	None	Staff time constraints, coordination with other statewide planning processes, level of planning effort required in relation to amount of funding available	Partners and stakeholders were enthusiastic about participating in planning process—offering different levels of involvement encouraged participation; FAQ brochure was an effective tool; A consistent approach and plan outline for all regions had several benefits, but planning regions will have more flexibility in the next planning round
Illinois	IDOT Division of Public and Intermodal Transportation—5310 plan	•	•	•	•	•	None	Ensuring participation by target populations and non-traditional stakeholders, regional coordinators who were new to transportation planning and funding	Statewide public outreach was key in developing support for new rural planning structure; outreach beyond existing contacts is necessary for involvement of non-

	Metropolitan Planning Organizations—small urban areas									traditional stakeholders; regional coordinators played an essential role in the planning process; evaluation of each region’s plan and process will help to strengthen planning process in the future
	New rural planning regions—rural areas									
Mississippi	MDOT—5310 plan and plan for JARC, New Freedom in non-urbanized areas MPOs in small urban areas	•	•	•	•	•	None	Level of available staff resources; obtaining participation of stakeholders; incorporating the Medicaid program into coordinated transportation services	Coordination summits and advisory groups were effective ways of increasing interagency cooperation; elected officials are hesitant to invest time in the process; mobility management efforts are hampered by the operation of a separate Medicaid transportation brokerage system	
Oregon	State’s Special Transportation Fund recipients (transit districts, counties, and Indian tribes)	•	•	•	•	•	Oregon’s Special Transportation Fund	Implementing the planning process with tribal governments unfamiliar with transportation planning; lack of dedicated planning staff or access to planning tools of STF recipients	Partnership with Association of Oregon Counties and provision of consulting assistance to STF recipients was vital; evaluation of first round of coordinated plans identified areas for enhancement; expanded stakeholder involvement; more consistent approach to identifying service gaps and needs; more use of data, mapping, and other tools; inclusion of a wider range of transportation strategies, linked to needs, in plans	

Table 2 (Continued)

		Funding Programs Covered by Coordinated Plans							
State DOT	Plan(s) Prepared by	Section 5310	Section 5316 (JARC), Small Urban Areas (50,000–199,999)	Section 5316, Non-urbanized Areas (<50,000)	Section 5317 (New Freedom), Small Urban Areas (50,000–199,999)	Section 5317, Non-urbanized Areas (<50,000)	Other	Challenges	Lessons Learned
South Carolina	SCDOT—5310 plan and statewide plan Regional Councils of Government	•	•	•	•	•	Section 5307 Section 5311 TANF Workforce Investment Act Voc Rehab Medicaid Administration on Aging Community Programs Independent Living Centers	Staff time constraints, COGs' unfamiliarity with transit/human service transportation issues and stakeholders, obtaining stakeholder participation, coordination of planning process with other transportation planning processes, lack of understanding of new process by some state agencies	A uniform approach to plan development across regions plus local flexibility resulted in unique regional plans that can be incorporated into other transportation plans; transportation needs and strategies varied across regions but a number of common categories of needs were identified; frequent communication with FTA as plans were developed was helpful; roles of staff and stakeholders will need to be reinforced in the future

Texas	TxDOT—5310 plan 24 local/regional planning committees	•	•	•	•	•	None	Obtaining participation by human service stakeholders, limited staff capacity, conflicts in cases where an individual is a client of more than one agency, shifting focus of transportation agencies from operations to outreach and consensus building	Local approach to plan development has worked well and been supported at many levels; goals should be realistic; providing guidance, funding, and technical assistance to local planning regions was key to their success
Wisconsin	Counties or regions	•	•	•	•	•	Wisconsin's Employment Transportation Assistance Program	Confusion on the part of counties/regions about responsibility for implementing coordinated plans in first round, little knowledge in planning regions about transportation grant programs	Providing extensive technical assistance to local entities to help them develop plans worked well; identifying team of DOT program managers to be part of planning meetings and give an overview of grant programs is helpful; DOT can assist regions by breaking statewide data down by county and providing the information to the regions

coordinated planning requirements. For each state, the table notes the entity responsible for preparing coordinated plans, covered funding programs, challenges, and lessons learned.

The states highlighted in these case studies, and others that responded to the survey conducted for this research, all encountered challenges as they developed and implemented their approaches to complying with the SAFETEA-LU coordinated planning requirements, and several have identified elements of their planning activities that they will modify or enhance in the future as coordinated plans are updated. However, the experiences of these states suggest that the following strategies can be used to develop a successful planning process.

Previous planning and coordination efforts can provide a foundation for SAFETEA-LU coordinated plans. Several states used existing JARC planning groups, 5310 application review committees, or coordinating committees or councils to provide an organizing structure, or a nucleus of stakeholders, for their coordinated planning processes. A number of states used information from existing plans and studies to form the basis for the required sections of the coordinated plans about target populations, transportation services, service gaps, and unmet needs.

The State DOT can provide a link between the planning process and other state agencies, especially human services agencies, to explain the planning requirements and encourage their participation in the coordinated planning process. In Connecticut, Illinois, and Ohio for example, DOT staff prepared answers to frequently asked questions, made presentations at meetings and conferences, and shared information about the coordinated planning process and activities with partners on other state-level coordination bodies. This assistance can be particularly helpful to entities other than the DOT that are responsible for preparing coordinated plans.

Planning organizations of all types are invaluable partners. MPOs, regional planning agencies, rural planning organizations, and associations of planning agencies are key players in many of the states' coordinated planning processes. Where coordinated plans are developed at the regional or local level, planning organizations in those areas can do the following:

- Contribute their knowledge of local contacts and organizations,
- Take the lead in organizing meetings with working groups or stakeholders,

- Share their planning expertise and knowledge of federal and state transportation funding programs and processes with local entities,
- Offer technical expertise in areas such as survey design and administration or analysis of census data, or use of GIS, and
- Provide a link to other transportation planning processes and documents such as an area's Transportation Improvement Program and long-range transportation plan and stakeholders.

Other types of partners can offer assistance in the coordinated planning process. Partners such as those listed below are participating in the coordinated planning activities of a number of states. Entities such as these provide technical assistance to local communities or coordination planning groups, conduct research and outreach to stakeholders, maintain coordination information clearinghouses or websites, and serve on stakeholder committees.

- University transportation centers funded by the U.S. DOT, such as the Texas Transportation Institute in Texas;
- University research centers funded by the federal Department of Health and Human Services, such as the University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disability Education, Research and Service (UCEDD) at the University of Connecticut (DHHS funds over 60 UCEDDs across the country);
- Other university-based institutes, such as the Illinois Institute of Rural Affairs at Western Illinois University; and
- Local government organizations, such as Oregon's Association of Counties.

A list of U.S. DOT's university transportation centers can be found at http://utc.dot.gov/utc_safetea-lu.html. The DHHS UCEDDs are listed at <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/add/states/ucedds.html>. Other similar types of partners that may be unique to a state are a resource that should be explored.

If plan development is delegated to regional or local entities, technical assistance from the state DOT is extremely helpful. Alaska, Connecticut, Illinois, New Jersey, Ohio, Oregon, South Carolina, Texas, Wisconsin, and other states all provide technical assistance of various types to the regional and local groups that are charged with preparing coordinated plans for their areas. Technical assistance can include the following:

- Development of a standardized approach to the planning process (planning steps and suggested timelines, for example);
- Summaries of the federal coordinated planning requirements;
- Provision of a coordinated plan outline or template;
- Lists of potential stakeholders, or contact information for specific stakeholders;
- Stakeholder outreach training;
- Sample meeting invitation letters, agendas;
- Transportation service inventory questionnaires;
- Forms for collecting information about service gaps or best practices;
- Answers to FAQ;
- Information about the Section 5310, 5316, and 5317 programs;
- Sample plans;
- Standardized project prioritization criteria; and
- Maintenance of a coordination website containing useful information.

Funding to support local or regional planning effort is provided by some state DOTs. In addition to the devotion of staff time to assisting local planning groups, several DOTs provide funding to local planning groups to support development of the coordinated plans, or pay for other outside assistance. TxDOT and South Carolina DOT retained consultants to provide training in stakeholder outreach and assistance with plan development, respectively, for their regional/local coordination planning groups. Sources of funding that can be applied to the costs of coordinated planning include

- Ten percent planning and administration portions of 5310, JARC, and New Freedom grants;
- Section 5307 formula funds;
- Section 5311 administrative funds; and
- Sections 5303 and 5304 Metropolitan Planning and Statewide Planning Funds.

Coordinated plans are most difficult to develop in rural areas; significant assistance and/or guidance may be needed by planning groups in those areas. For communities and local organizations in rural areas, especially those that do not receive public transportation services or that are not part of a regional planning agency service area, developing a coordinated plan can be a daunting undertaking. Organizations in such areas may be new to the trans-

portation planning process and unfamiliar with the concepts and practices of transportation coordination. Moreover, opportunities for coordinating transportation services in very rural areas may be limited or nonexistent, as is the case in many communities in Alaska. Illinois DOT devoted much effort to creating a structure—by defining regions, facilitating connections with regional planning organizations, hiring and training regional coordinators—that would facilitate ongoing transportation planning in rural areas where no such responsibilities had existed in the past. AKDOT developed a plan template for use in areas where the potential for coordination is limited, so that those communities would still be eligible to receive transportation funds.

CHAPTER 4 ELEMENTS OF THE COORDINATED PLANNING PROCESS: ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES AND BEST PRACTICES

This chapter presents alternative approaches to each step of the coordinated planning process, based on the experiences of state DOTs to date. Trends among DOTs and best practices established by specific states are described as well.

4.1 Organize the Planning Process

There are several different roles that a state DOT could play in the development of coordinated plans. As noted in Chapter 2, the designated recipient of funds from the Section 5310, 5316, and 5317 programs must ensure that projects and services that receive funding from those programs are derived from a coordinated plan. State DOTs are the designated recipients of 5310 program funds for their state, and are typically, but not always, the designated recipient for JARC and New Freedom funds that are apportioned to small urban and non-urbanized areas. While the designated recipient must pay attention to coordinated plans when making funding decisions, some other entity may be responsible for the actual preparation of the coordinated plan(s).

4.1.1 Current Practice

In their responses to the online survey conducted as part of this research, state DOTs indicated that the majority (92%) are the recipients of 5310 funds. Over 90% of the DOTs are also the designated recipients

for JARC and New Freedom funds for non-urbanized areas—91% and 96%, respectively. Slightly fewer DOTs are the recipients of JARC and New Freedom funds for small urban areas (86% of responding DOTs for each type of funds). Table 3 shows the number of respondents that are the designated recipient for the funds that are normally apportioned to state governors—Section 5310 funds for the state, and JARC and New Freedom funds for small urban and non-urbanized areas.

Table 3 also shows the number of responding DOTs that have direct responsibility for preparing coordinated plans that cover those funding sources.

Fewer DOTs have responsibility for preparing plans than are the designated recipients of the three funds. Slightly more than half of the DOTs (54%) prepare coordinated plans that cover Section 5310 funds. For the other funding sources, roughly 1/3 of the DOTs are responsible for preparing their plans, while another entity prepares the plans in the other 2/3 of the states.

The DOTs that indicated that other entities are responsible for preparing coordinated plans identified those entities. Responses were varied, and included counties, MPOs, regional or rural planning organizations, local transportation providers or human services agencies, communities, grant recipients, and designated local agencies.

4.1.2 Alternative Planning Process Structures

As a result of the flexibility that states have with regard to designating recipients for funds from the three sources and assigning responsibility for developing coordinated plans, state DOTs face a number of decisions when designing the process that will be used to comply with the SAFETEA-LU requirements. Questions to be answered include the following:

- What entity will be the designated recipient for the JARC and New Freedom funds for small urban and non-urbanized areas?

Table 3 Designated recipients and responsibility for preparing coordinated plans

Funding Source	Designated Recipient		Response Count	Responsible for Preparing Coordinated Plan		Response Count
	State DOT	Other Entity		State DOT	Other Entity	
Section 5310—statewide	92.0% (23)	8.0% (2)	25	54.2% (13)	45.8% (11)	24
JARC—small urban areas (50,000–199,999 population)	86.4% (19)	13.6% (3)	22	27.3% (6)	72.7% (16)	22
JARC—non-urbanized areas (<50,000 population)	91.3% (21)	8.7% (2)	23	36.4% (8)	63.6% (14)	22
New Freedom—small urban areas (50,000–199,999 population)	86.4% (19)	13.6% (3)	22	27.3% (6)	72.7% (16)	22
New Freedom—non-urbanized areas (<50,000 population)	95.5% (21)	4.5% (1)	22	31.8% (7)	68.2% (15)	22

- Will a statewide coordinated plan be prepared? If so, will it cover all three funding programs? Will it be a compilation of regional or local-level coordinated plans, or a completely separate document?
- Will regional or local-level plans be developed? If so, how will “local” be defined? What entities will play the lead role in coordinated planning activities in those areas?

The structure of the coordinated planning process in a number of states that responded to the online survey is shown in Table 4. (Other states responded to the survey, but did not identify themselves.)

In 13 of these states (listed below), the state DOT is the designated recipient for all of the funds other than those for large urbanized areas (Connecticut DOT, however, is also the designated recipients of JARC and New Freedom funds for the state’s three large urban areas), but the development of coordinated plans is the responsibility of “local” entities. “Local” entities generally include communities, counties, planning organizations, transit providers, human service agencies, and various regional groups.

- Alaska,
- Connecticut,
- Florida,
- Illinois,
- Michigan,
- Missouri,
- Ohio,
- Oregon,
- South Carolina,
- South Dakota,
- Texas,
- West Virginia, and
- Wisconsin.

In 11 of these 12 states, the local plans are stand-alone documents. Connecticut and South Carolina DOTs, however, have also compiled the regional/local plans into a statewide plan. In addition, Texas DOT prepares a separate plan for Section 5310 projects.

Two state DOTs among the survey respondents—Maryland and Vermont—are the designated recipients for Section 5310, JARC, and New Freedom funds for small urban and non-urbanized areas, and prepare a plan that includes a chapter that pertains to each regional/local area.

Finally, three states have taken slightly different approaches to the assignment of coordinated planning responsibilities.

In New Jersey, the state’s public transit operator, NJ TRANSIT, rather than the state DOT, is the designated recipient for all funds. The state’s counties are responsible for preparing all coordinated plans; in addition, two out of the state’s three MPOs developed regional coordinated plans.

Mississippi DOT is the designated recipient for Section 5310 funds and JARC and New Freedom funds for non-urbanized areas, and is responsible for preparing plans to cover those funding sources. In the small urban areas, MPOs are the designated funding recipients and prepare the coordinated plans.

Similarly, New York State DOT is the designated recipient for Section 5310 and non-urbanized area funds and is responsible for developing a coordinated plan to cover them. Other designated recipients prepare plans for small urban areas.

4.1.3 Lessons Learned

Recommendations from state DOTs that have developed successful coordinated planning processes and advice that is drawn from their experiences are provided in the following paragraphs.

Take advantage of existing resources and capabilities, and build on a base of previous planning efforts if possible when designing a coordinated planning process. In Connecticut, relationships and processes that were developed to produce JARC plans formed the basis for the SAFETEA-LU coordinated planning process. The same regional boundaries were used, entities played similar roles, and JARC planning partners formed the nucleus of new stakeholder groups. In Oregon and Texas, existing coordination mandates and planning requirements guided the design of efforts to implement the new planning requirements.

Consider developing a structure that can be used for planning efforts beyond the preparation of coordinated plans. Illinois DOT took advantage of the need to implement the coordinated planning process to create an infrastructure that would enable rural areas to participate in transportation planning on an ongoing basis. The DOT identified regions, hired regional coordinators, and provided training in functions such as preparing plans, reviewing funding applications, and ranking projects. Regions not only develop coordinated plans, but also establish

Table 4 Structure of coordinated planning process—survey respondent

	State DOT is Designated Recipient for Section 5310 Funds	State DOT is Designated Recipient for JARC and New Freedom Funds for Small Urban and Non-urbanized Areas	Other Entities are Designated Recipients for JARC, New Freedom Funds for Small Urban Areas	State Responsible for Preparing Coordinated Plan(s)			Other Entities
				State Compiles Regional/Local Plans into Statewide Plan	State Develops Statewide Plan that Includes Regional/Local Chapters	Other Entities Responsible for Preparing Coordinated Plan(s)	
Alaska	•	•				•	Individual communities; Fairbanks (small urban area)
Connecticut	•	•		•		•	Regional coordinated planning working groups, Regional Planning Organizations
Florida	•	•				•	Florida Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged
Illinois	•	•				•	
Maryland	•	•				•	
Michigan	•	•				•	Participants in the grant programs, on county or regional basis
Missouri	•	•				•	Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) and Regional Planning Commissions
Ohio	•	•				•	Local public or non-profit entities designated by County Commissioners, at a county or regional level
Oregon	•	•				•	42 Special Transportation Fund agencies
South Carolina	•	•		•		•	Regional Councils of Government (COGs), in partnership with SCDOT
South Dakota	•	•				•	Local transit agencies and/or local human services agencies
Texas	•	•				•	24 regional/local planning committees led by MPOs, COGs, and rural and urban transit districts
Vermont	•	•	•			•	
West Virginia	•	•		•		•	
Wisconsin	•	•				•	Counties or regions

priorities among projects, review grant applications, and make funding recommendations.

Consider enlisting the aid of a technical or advisory committee as the planning process is designed, implemented, monitored, and modified. Such a group should be composed of representatives of the entities that will be responsible for creating the coordinated plans, and could be formed at either the state or the regional level.

Once established, provide materials such as answers to FAQs, PowerPoint presentations, and planning process overviews to explain the state's coordinated planning requirements and federal and state transportation grant programs to local entities and stakeholders. Attend regional or local planning meetings to discuss requirements and support regional/local groups in their efforts to inform and involve planning partners and stakeholders.

Use planning organizations either as lead agencies or in a more technical, advisory role. With their familiarity with transportation planning processes and grant programs and their technical expertise, regional or rural planning organizations are valuable partners in the coordinated planning process. In some areas, planning organizations may be best equipped to take on the role of a lead agency in the coordinated planning effort, given their resources and capabilities and past experience with transportation planning. In other areas, the most appropriate role for planning organizations may be as technical consultants to local coordinated planning groups.

Clearly communicate that coordinated plans are intended to be meaningful local documents. Strong support and technical assistance from the state DOT and use of regional planning organizations in key roles may give local planning groups the impression that those other entities are responsible for implementing the coordinated plan for a region or community, or lessen their active engagement in plan development.

Evaluate the results of the planning process, and revise as necessary. Modifications to the structure used to develop FY 2007 coordinated plans or the division of responsibilities may be suggested by the experience gained during the first round of planning. Several DOTs, including Alaska, Illinois, Oregon, and Wisconsin have conducted evaluations or reviewed the outcomes of their planning process, and some revisions to the process will result. Wisconsin DOT, for example, determined that local planning groups would become more invested

in implementing their coordinated plans if RPCs provided technical assistance and guidance rather than playing a lead role in planning activities, and has designated those local groups as the entities responsible for developing the second round of coordinated plans.

4.2 Determine Plan Contents

FTA guidance identifies several elements that must be included in coordinated plans: identification of current transportation providers and services, an assessment of the transportation needs of the target populations, identification of strategies or projects to address needs and service gaps, and implementation priorities among those strategies or projects.

State DOTs have exercised their flexibility with regard to coordinated plan contents, aside from the required items, and the degree of detail that is provided. Sample tables of contents from the plans developed in several states are provided in Appendix E.

A number of states **provide sample plan outlines and/or sample plans to regional or local groups** that are charged with preparing coordinated plans. Such examples are useful to local planning groups as they work through the planning process, and help to achieve consistency among the plans prepared throughout a state. Flexibility for the regional/local groups is important, however, so that local plans reflect local circumstances and preferences. Plan outlines provided to communities or planning groups by the Connecticut and Texas DOTs can also be found in Appendix B and Appendix D, respectively.

More detailed descriptions of plan contents, and suggested ways to develop required or recommended sections, are another useful tool for those responsible for preparing coordinated plans. Planning guides prepared by Alaska and Oregon DOTs and NJ TRANSIT are provided in Appendix A, Appendix C, and Appendix F.

4.3 Identify Stakeholders

One of the required elements of the coordinated plans is the involvement of several specific groups of stakeholders: public, private, and non-profit transportation providers; public, private, and non-profit human services providers; and representatives of the target populations. In addition to these required groups, other stakeholders, unique to a region or

a state, will be valuable sources of information as coordinated plans are developed.

In response to stakeholders suggested in the FTA's coordinated planning guidance and the grant program circulars, a broad and inclusive group of stakeholders was involved in the development of the coordinated plans of DOTs responding to the online survey.

MPOs, public transportation providers, and human service agencies with some involvement in transportation services (by operating, purchasing, or providing access to services) were the types of entities most frequently involved in planning activities. These entities were identified as stakeholders by 90% or more of responding DOTs.

Seventy to ninety percent of respondents reported involving stakeholders such as Regional Planning Agencies (RPAs); municipalities, agencies administering FTA funds; private transportation brokers; intercity bus operators, transit riders, potential transit riders; mental health agencies, and specific human service agencies—Departments of Human Services or Social Services, Departments of Education, and Vocational Rehabilitation agencies.

Fifty to seventy percent of responding DOTs indicated that the following stakeholders were involved in their planning processes: Councils of Governments (COGs), vanpool providers, persons with disabilities, older adults, individuals with low incomes, protection and advocacy organizations, Centers for Independent Living (CILs), workforce development boards, job training and placement agencies, health care facilities, and other specific human services agencies—Departments of Children and Families or other Medicaid agencies, Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs), and Departments of Developmental Disabilities.

State DOTs and their planning partners have found several particularly useful approaches to identifying the specific organizations and agencies in a community or region that need to be invited to join the planning process, and for encouraging their participation.

Make the identification of stakeholders an action item for regional or local planning groups. In Connecticut, one of the first tasks undertaken by the regional coordinated plan working groups was to pool information and develop a list of stakeholders to participate in planning meetings and receive a transportation service survey. In the Hartford region, an initial survey requesting information about contacts was sent to transportation providers; a second

survey was sent to a broader group to gather information about services and unmet needs.

Start with existing advisory groups or stakeholders that participate in other transportation planning activities. Organizations or agencies that have a history of involvement in human services transportation in an advisory role made up the nucleus of stakeholders for the coordinated planning process in a number of states, including Connecticut, Vermont, and Maryland. Consider beginning a list of stakeholders with entities that play the following roles:

- Helped to develop JARC plans prior to the implementation of the SAFETEA-LU coordinated planning requirements;
- Sit on Section 5310 application review committees;
- Have submitted grant applications to the Section 5310 or JARC programs, or state transportation programs for the target populations;
- Are members of state interagency coordination councils; and
- Serve on advisory committees to providers of transportation services for older adults and/or persons with disabilities.

Include new partners who can bring local knowledge and contacts to the planning process.

Oregon DOT found its alliance with the Oregon Association of Counties and its economic development planners to be beneficial for this reason, among others. Illinois DOT included the Illinois Association of Regional Councils among its planning partners; while not typically involved in transportation planning, the organization worked with non-traditional stakeholders and provided technical assistance and support to the regional coordinators charged with developing the coordinated plans.

Offer varying levels of involvement to potential stakeholders, to increase the chances that they will choose to participate in the planning process and broaden the stakeholder base. Connecticut DOT and the regional planning organizations that led or played key roles in the development of the state's five regional plans offered stakeholders the options of receiving e-mail updates, responding to the transportation service survey, attending selected meetings, or being part of ongoing planning committees or working groups.

Provide lists of contact information to regional/local planning groups. Wisconsin DOT assisted the regional planning councils that led the first round of

coordinated planning, and the counties that took over for the second round, by assembling lists of the types of organizations and agencies that would be potential stakeholders for the local groups. The coordinated planning toolkit developed by WisDOT provided not only suggestions about organizations that might be included, but also contact information for those groups.

Work with coordination councils or committees at the state level. DOTs in Illinois, New Jersey, and Maryland involved a state-level coordinating committee in their coordinated planning efforts. In Texas, the state-level Regional Planning and Public Transportation Study Group helped to determine the structure of the coordinated planning process in the state. In Wisconsin, a new Inter-Agency Council on Transportation Coordination has been formed by the governor, at least in part due to the increased visibility of coordination that has resulted from the planning efforts. A state-level entity of this type can provide the DOT with contacts with supportive human services agencies at the state level, which can in turn encourage representatives of those agencies at the regional and local levels to participate in the planning process. In Illinois, the Rural Transit Assistance Center, which serves as a Coordination Clearinghouse for the Illinois

Coordinating Committee on Transportation, was a source of information about transportation coordination and technical assistance for the groups responsible for developing regional coordinated plans.

4.4 Conduct Outreach Activities

FTA requires the developers of coordinated plans to build opportunities for stakeholders to take part in the planning process, and to encourage their participation. Examples of outreach activities are included in the planning guidance.

The outreach methods reported by DOTs responding to the online survey are shown in Figure 3.

The most frequently used approaches, cited by 80% or more of responding DOTs, included community planning sessions to identify needs, strategies, and priorities; invitation letters; and e-mail lists.

Forty to eighty percent reported using the United We Ride *Framework for Action* assessment tool (60% of responding DOTs), mail surveys, focus groups, other self-assessment tools, or newspaper and/or radio ads.

Ten to forty percent of respondents indicated that their efforts to recruit stakeholders included website

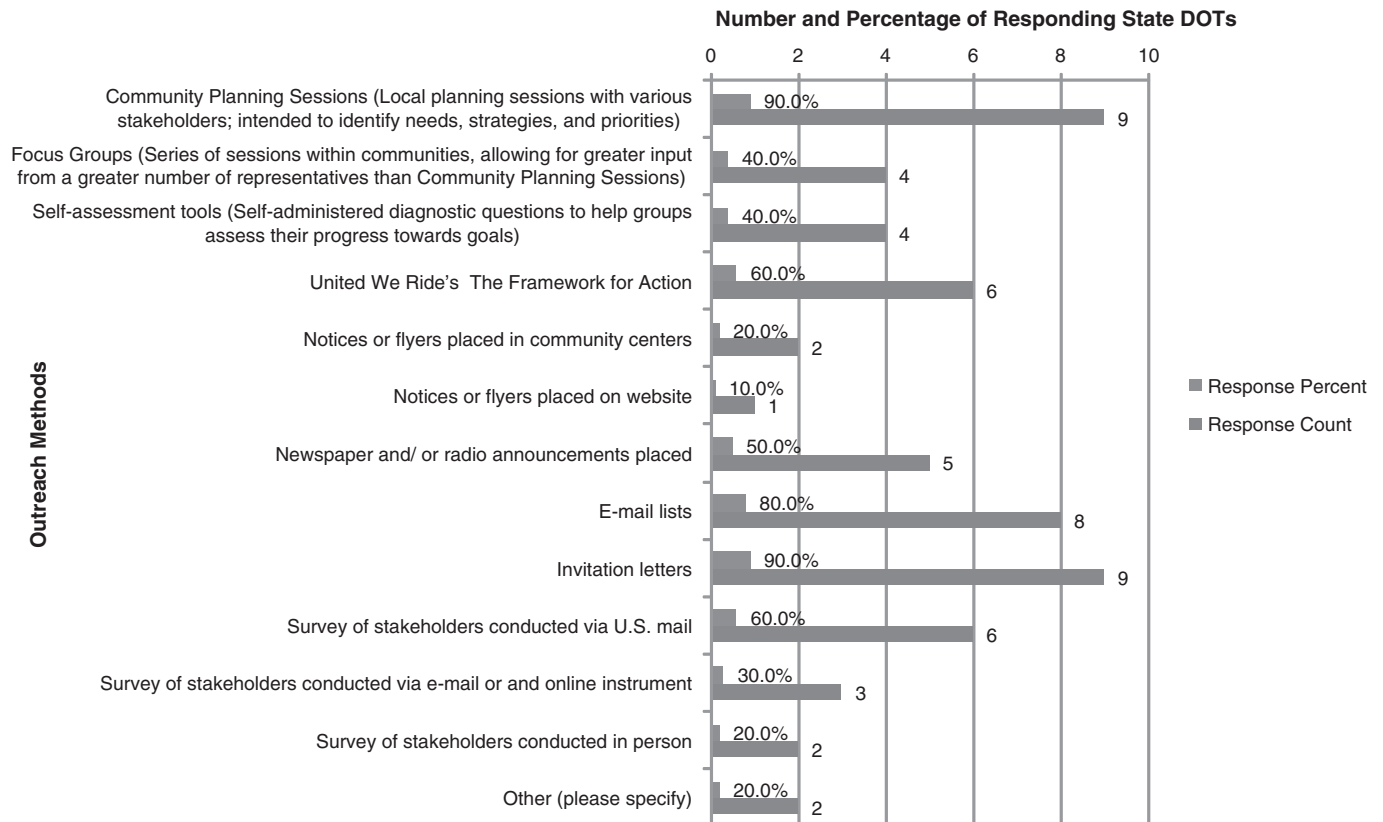


Figure 3 Outreach activities.

notices, in-person surveys, e-mail surveys, and notices or flyers in community centers.

The only outreach methods noted by DOTs to involve stakeholders in the planning process in addition to those suggested by FTA were a phone survey and teleconferences.

Several best practices related to outreach activities, used by the case study DOTs and survey respondents, are listed below.

Provide technical assistance and outreach materials to local/regional planning groups.

DOTs can assist regional or local coordinated planners by providing sample materials to use in their outreach efforts, and/or guidance related to involving stakeholders in planning efforts. The Wisconsin DOT toolkit (<http://www.dot.wisconsin.gov/localgov/transit/toolkit.htm>) and the coordination website maintained by Texas DOT (www.regionalserviceplanning.org) both include meeting invitation letters, agendas, forms for tracking meeting invitations and attendance, and meeting evaluation forms for use by the organizers of regional/local coordinated planning efforts. Several states answered questions to inform regional/local planning partners about the coordinated planning requirements and to assist them with explaining the planning process to stakeholders. FAQ materials developed by the Connecticut and Texas DOTs, and Q&A information from FTA that Wisconsin DOT provides as part of its toolkit, can be found in Appendix B, Appendix D, and Appendix G.

Offer training for entities responsible for developing coordinated plans so that they are able to work with stakeholders more effectively. Texas DOT obtained professional training in stakeholder outreach for lead agencies prior to its regional coordination forums, so that those agencies would be able to identify and recruit stakeholders and facilitate the forums.

Use special coordination summits or forums to generate interest in the coordinated planning process on the part of non-traditional stakeholders. Texas DOT held 10 regional coordination forums and Mississippi DOT conducted two statewide coordination summits to engage human services agencies and other stakeholders in the planning process. Reflecting an ongoing emphasis on reaching out to human service agencies that may not typically be involved in transportation planning, Texas DOT is requiring the lead agency in each of its coordinated planning regions to develop a strategy for engaging

Health and Human Services agencies and include it in this year's plan.

The United We Ride *Framework for Action: Building the Fully Coordinated Transportation System* is an effective tool for engaging stakeholders for whom transportation coordination may be a new concept. As noted earlier, 60% of DOTs that responded to the online survey used the *Framework for Action* as an outreach mechanism. The assessment tool (presented in two versions, one tailored to communities and the other to state agencies), is designed to be used by a wide range of stakeholders, and is applicable to areas in which coordination is minimal or nonexistent as well to areas with a history of coordination. Another benefit of incorporating the *Framework for Action* into stakeholder outreach efforts is that by working through the exercises, participants become more aware of how coordination can benefit both the organizations that partner in the effort and the end users of transportation services. Awareness of the potential benefits of coordination can be an incentive for non-traditional stakeholders to become active contributors to the coordinated planning process. Both versions of the *Framework* and its Facilitator's Guide are available at the United We Ride website, www.unitedweride.gov/1_81_ENG_HTML.htm.

Involving elected officials as stakeholders or endorsers of the planning effort can encourage other stakeholders to participate, and increase the chances of successful local funding requests. The District of Columbia DOT found that having the district's mayor endorse the interagency coordination planning task force ensured the participation of all human services agencies and departments. In Alaska, the requirement for all plans to be officially adopted by a local body meant that elected officials became aware of the coordinated planning process and more receptive to requests for local matching funds.

4.5 Document Existing Transportation Services

State DOTs and their planning partners have used a number of methods to collect information about existing transportation services and providers, a required element of the coordinated plans.

Surveys of transportation providers were the most widely used method of collecting information, by 92% of the DOTs providing information about

their data collection efforts in the online survey. Some state DOTs have developed a survey questionnaire for use by local or regional coordinated planning groups. Others have outlined the types of information that should be assembled in materials that provide an overview or guide to the planning process for planning partners. Survey questionnaires used in Connecticut and Illinois can be found in Appendix B and Appendix H. Examples of planning process guidance prepared by the Alaska and Oregon DOTs can be found in Appendix A and Appendix C.

Key pieces of information to document the transportation options available to the target populations that can also be used to help identify service gaps include the following:

- Provider,
- Service area,
- Days and hours of service,
- Eligibility of riders and trips (applicable to demand responsive services),
- Accessibility, and
- Fare.

To help develop coordination strategies later in the planning process, information about annual costs (both operating and administrative/management costs), funding sources and amounts, and operating statistics such as annual passenger trips and hours of service are useful pieces of information.

Other popular methods of data collection, used by 80% or more of survey respondents, included **planning workshops or forums and surveys of human services agencies**. One half to two-thirds of respondents used **surveys of users and other stakeholders and Internet research**.

It can sometimes be difficult to obtain the desired response rate to a survey, particularly if transportation providers are asked to provide detailed information about their services. Alternative sources of information that can help to fill in some of the blanks include **service inventories developed as part of other plans or studies and recent Section 5310 or JARC grant applications**.

Creative means of distributing surveys or collecting information may also be effective. A county planning group in Oregon obtained over 600 responses to a general public survey by inserting questionnaires into utility bills, utilizing a local Boy Scout troop to hand out questionnaires, and offering a prize of a restaurant gift certificate to survey respondents. Highly motivated members of the

planning group in one rural Alaskan community conducted an inventory of every vehicle in the municipality that could potentially be available for coordinated general public/human services transportation. Making surveys available in languages other than English may also help to improve response rates.

4.6 Identify Service Gaps and Unmet Needs

Another required element of a coordinated plan is an assessment of the transportation needs of the target populations covered by the plan, which may include older adults, persons with disabilities, and individuals with low incomes.

Over 80% of the state DOTs that responded to the online survey reported using analysis of demographic data, analysis of available transportation services, and GIS tools to identify needs and service gaps. Surveys, planning workshops or forums, focus groups and other stakeholder outreach methods also yielded more qualitative information about service needs or other transportation barriers faced by the target populations, such as problems with accessibility or affordability of service.

The U.S. Census is an obvious source for demographic data, but local planning groups may not know where to find it or how to use it to support their coordinated plans without assistance. **A Census data “primer”** that outlines step-by-step procedures for obtaining demographic data from the Census website and performing basic spreadsheet analysis to determine the demographic characteristics of a planning region can be found in Appendix I. This primer, or a similar guide, could be distributed to local planning groups by state DOTs.

Another approach is to **rely on planning agencies to provide technical assistance to regional or local groups**. In Wisconsin, regional planning councils have made a transition from lead agencies in coordinated planning efforts to “consultants” that offer technical assistance to counties, particularly with gathering demographic data and mapping. Wisconsin DOT also found it useful to summarize relevant data at the regional level and provide it to the counties.

GIS mapping is a particularly valuable tool for identifying and displaying service gaps. Items that are more informative when displayed on a map include the following:

- The number, percentage, and density of target populations;

- Popular activity centers or common trip destinations for the target populations, such as:
 - Major employers,
 - Employment training program sites,
 - One-stop career centers,
 - Hospitals and medical centers (including dialysis facilities),
 - Senior centers and adult day health program locations,
 - Shopping center,
 - Colleges and universities,
 - Human service program locations such as Medicaid and TANF program offices, and
 - Centers for independent living.

Overlaying bus and rail routes, rail stations, and demand response service areas on a map that includes target populations and activity centers can show spatial service gaps very effectively. Transit routes that are coded to indicate days and hours of service can illustrate temporal gaps.

Comments and observations from stakeholders such as members of the target populations, transportation providers, and human services agency representatives can provide more personal and specific descriptions of service gaps, unmet needs, and other transportation barriers.

4.7 Develop Strategies to Address Gaps and Needs

Following the identification of the service gaps and unmet needs faced by the target populations, coordinated plan developers must formulate strategies, activities, and/or projects to address those needs and gaps and increase the efficiency of transportation services.

Whether coordinated plans include strategies, projects, activities, or some combination is a local decision. Two examples are summarized below.

Maryland: The coordinated plan identifies strategies that have been determined to be priorities in each planning region, the unmet needs or issues that they address, and potential projects that would help to implement the strategy. For example, “establish a centralized point of access that provides information on available transportation options in the region” is a strategy, which responds to the lack of a centralized repository of transportation information for customers, human services agency staff members, and others. Grant applicants propose specific projects that must be

included in a strategy or address a need that is included in a region’s plan. Potential projects that are related to this strategy include creating a mobility manager to serve as an information clearinghouse (among other duties) and implementing new or expanded outreach programs to provide information and training related to transportation services. Lists of projects are not intended to be complete or exclusive—other projects may be proposed for funding.

Alaska: The coordinated plan prepared by each community must identify strategies for addressing needs and include an appendix that lists prioritized projects for which the community intends to seek funding. Information about projects, their priorities, and the strategy they are linked to is requested in funding applications.

Lessons from the case study sites included the following:

The difference between a strategy and a project or proposed service may not be apparent to local planning groups. Alaska DOT includes in its planning guidance to communities examples of strategies and sample projects that can help to achieve the strategy. For instance: “Develop travel training programs and facilities for clients” is a strategy. Related projects might be: (1) convert storage room in bus barn to travel training center and apply for facilities grant funds for conversion, and (2) hire trainer to train partner agency staff for travel training as part of client screening. Plans developed by communities are to include both strategies and related projects; grant applications request identification of the strategy from which the proposed project is derived.

The difference between a strategy and a need may not be clear to local planning groups. The evaluation of coordinated plans developed by Oregon’s Special Transportation Fund agencies found that some plans expressed needs that incorporated strategies for addressing them, by identifying a need for a particular type or mode of service in a specific area or for a specific type of trip, for example. Plans can be improved by clearly stating needs, identifying general strategies that can address those needs, and translating those strategies into specific projects.

Members of the target populations may be faced with other types of gaps in addition to temporal or spatial gaps in the transportation system. Connecticut’s coordinated plan identifies gaps in the following categories:

- **Information and Awareness**—underutilization of the transportation system and travel needs that go unmet due to lack of coordination between regions, separate or insufficient marketing efforts, lack of knowledge among service providers about resources that could be used more effectively through coordination, and lack of information about how to use services.
- **Geographical**—areas in which additional services are needed.
- **Temporal**—additional hours or days of service that are needed.
- **Client**—gaps due to restrictions on eligible individuals or types of trips, or on service parameters such as the level of assistance provided to passengers.
- **Service Quality**—issues that restrict travel options or affect the quality of a passenger’s travel, such as lack of fixed route amenities, lack of accessible taxi service, aging vehicles, high rates of driver turnover, and insufficient numbers of volunteer drivers.

Include a range of strategies in the coordinated plan to increase the potential for successfully addressing service gaps and utilizing available funding sources. In several of the case study states, local planning groups showed a tendency to propose new or expanded traditional fixed-route or demand-response services as a way to address unmet needs. Alaska DOT plans to encourage communities to think about a broader range of strategies, including use of volunteers and fuel conservation or efficiency measures, when plans are updated.

Consider physical accessibility projects, in addition to new or improved services, as a way to expand travel options. One of the regional planning agencies that is leading the coordinated planning process in one of Connecticut’s large urban areas will broaden its definition of gaps and consider projects such as upgrading bus shelters to be compliant with the ADA Accessibility Guidelines for Buildings and Facilities (ADAAG) as its region’s plan is updated.

Capital improvement projects and the deployment of technology systems to improve efficiency or facilitate coordination could also be part of a range of strategies. Local planning groups may limit their thinking of strategies or projects to the provision of transportation services, or the purchase of vehicles. Other types of capital projects, such as the purchase of bus shelters, or the introduction of automated trip

reservations or transportation information systems, may also be effective ways to address transportation barriers for the target populations.

4.8 Prioritize Strategies

FTA requires coordinated plans to establish priorities among strategies, activities, and projects on the basis of time, resources, and feasibility of implementation.

Some states prioritize strategies or projects when the plan is prepared, as in the Maryland and Alaska examples presented above. In other states, such as Connecticut and Illinois, prioritization happens during the competitive selection process. Priorities among projects are first established at the regional level, and funding recommendations are made to the DOT (CT) or state oversight committee (IL) by the regional planning groups. The state-level agencies also apply prioritization criteria before final funding decisions are made.

Standard prioritization criteria developed by Connecticut DOT (with input from the state’s coordinated planning regions) are found in Appendix B.

4.9 Design and Administer Competitive Selection Process

Projects that receive funding from the JARC or New Freedom programs must not only be derived from a local coordinated plan, but must also be chosen through a fair and equitable competitive selection process. As with other elements of the planning process, state DOTs have a number of alternatives with regard to the selection process and its administration, and have the flexibility to design a process that best meets local needs and preferences. While the process for allocating Section 5310 funds among specific recipients and projects is not required by FTA to be a competitive one, most states solicit applications and conduct some type of selection process. Exploring opportunities for combining or coordinating the Section 5310 selection process with the process used to award JARC and New Freedom funds is a natural extension of the implementation of the coordinated planning requirements for all three grant programs.

Nine DOTs that have direct responsibility for preparing a coordinated plan provided information about the competitive selection processes they are using to make Section 5310, JARC, and New Freedom funding decisions.

Of those nine DOTs, four (44%) are conducting the competitive selection process. In one of the responding states, an MPO is in charge of the selection process. Other states reported that the DOT and the MPO/COGs in the coordinated planning regions will share the responsibility. In another state, local stakeholders conduct the process using criteria developed by the DOT and agreed to by the stakeholders.

In a third of the responding states, the competitive selection process is used to solicit projects/recipients throughout the state. In 22% of the states, the selection process is conducted for regions within the state; in another 22%, projects/recipients are solicited in the state’s non-urbanized areas. In one state (11% of respondents), the process is used to select projects/recipients in all of the state’s small urban areas. (No state that answered this question is conducting a selection process in individual small urban areas.) In the District of Columbia, the selection process covers the District and counties in two contiguous states.

Because there are many ways to structure a grant application process, the survey asked the DOTs to identify the type of funding recipients or projects to be selected through their processes. Responses are shown in Figure 4.

Nearly 56% of respondents reported that project or service proposals from small urban and/or non-urbanized areas are selected. A third of the respondents reviewed and selected funding applications from small urban and/or non-urbanized areas for projects or services identified in the coordinated plans for those areas. Another DOT responded that the selec-

tion process combines statewide 5310, 5317, and state funds. One state indicated that the selection process is used to choose providers of specific services that have been prioritized in a statewide plan.

Eighty-nine percent of the responding DOTs reported that selection criteria for JARC and New Freedom projects/services have been established. All respondents reported using the following selection criteria:

- Inclusion of project or strategy in a coordinated plan;
- Ability of project to address a transportation need, service gap, or barrier identified in a coordinated plan;
- Demonstration of efforts to coordinate with existing transportation services;
- Applicant’s financial and managerial capability;
- Source and amount of local matching funds; and
- Perceived project need.

Eighty-eight percent of respondents utilize the following selection criteria:

- Applicant’s experience and record in transportation and transportation coordination,
- Estimated costs and project budget, and
- Plan for evaluating project success.

Only one respondent indicated an additional selection criterion—ability of the project/service to provide an example for the rest of the state.






72. Funding recipients or projects to be selected through the process:		Response Percent	Response Count
Project or service proposals from small urban and/or non-urbanized areas		55.6%	5
Funding applications from small urban and/or non-urbanized areas for projects/services identified in their coordinated plans		33.3%	3
Providers of specific services that have been prioritized in a statewide coordinated plan		11.1%	1
 Other (please specify)		22.2%	2
<i>answered question</i>			9
<i>skipped question</i>			19

Figure 4 Recipients or projects selected through competitive selection processes.

In most cases, the same number of respondents indicated that they use a particular selection criterion for both JARC and New Freedom projects/services.

DOTs described how their Section 5310 selection process has been or will be coordinated with the JARC and/or New Freedom selection processes. Common approaches include joint application processes, similar or identical selection criteria, consideration of the extent to which the applicant coordinates with other transportation providers, or ways in which a project funded by one source can complement or bolster projects funded by another. States are also using strategies such as allocating a portion of Section 5310 and state funds to MPOs in coordinated planning regions to use on projects of their choice, and allowing purchase of service and use of vouchers across programs.

Case study DOTs offered the following additional suggestions for coordinating between the Section 5310 programs and the other two funding programs.

Incorporate coordinated planning activities into Section 5310 selection criteria. In Connecticut, Section 5310 applicants are awarded additional points for participating in coordinated planning activities. In addition, regions may identify priorities for Section 5310 awards in their areas based on service gaps or needs documented in their coordinated plan.

Use information in coordinated plans about gaps, needs, and priorities to establish project selection criteria or priorities for the Section 5310 program. This approach could also be used to incorporate findings from the coordinated plans into other transportation grant programs, such as state programs that provide support for transportation services for the three target populations.

4.10 Coordinate with Other Planning Processes

The survey asked the DOTs to explain how the coordinated planning process was being incorporated into existing statewide and metropolitan transportation planning processes.

Coordination efforts between the various planning processes can be summarized as follows:

- MPOs and regional planning commissions were invited to participate in coordinated planning meetings and forums.
- MPOs and other planning organizations provided data for the coordinated plans.

- MPOs and other planning organizations reviewed coordinated plans.
- Identical timelines are used for preparing coordinated plans and other transportation plans.
- Projects identified in coordinated plans are included in Transportation Improvement Programs (TIPs) and Statewide Transportation Improvement Programs (STIPs).
- Coordinated plans will be included as components of other long-range transportation plans

A planning partner of one of the case study DOTs offered the following additional advice about incorporating coordinated plans into other plans and processes:

Synchronize the grant application and award cycles of all transportation grant programs, so that grant applicants can pursue the funding they need to implement a project from all available sources concurrently. It can be very difficult to move projects forward if funding must come from different programs with varying application and award schedules.

4.11 Update Coordinated Plan

How often coordinated plans need to be updated was a question raised several times by state DOTs responding to the online survey.

FTA's final guidance, as transmitted in the Coordinated Planning chapters of the revised program circulars for the Section 5310, JARC, and New Freedom programs (issued in May 2007), notes that coordinated plans should be updated in concert with the schedules for metropolitan transportation plans, at a minimum. This means every 4 years in air quality nonattainment and maintenance areas, and every 5 years in air quality attainment areas. The coordinated plan cycle in a particular state or community may be shorter, so that it coincides with the competitive selection process, for example, which may be conducted annually, or up to every 3 years.

State DOTs that responded to the online survey shared their anticipated plan update cycles. The majority indicated that they will update plans every 2 years, or completely update plans every 4 to 5 years, but encourage regional or local planning groups to revise the plans more frequently to incorporate new information, address new service gaps or needs, or include new projects.

A number of states, having developed coordinated plans for FY 2007, have undertaken or are

embarking on an update for FY 2008 or FY 2009. The first round of planning appears to have been a learning experience, and states anticipate modifications to the planning process or planning activities to make enhancements such as the following:

- Broaden the scope of plans in response to a new coordination administrative order executed by the state's governor,
- Emphasize different types of transportation services among proposed strategies,
- Provide a plan template for communities to follow,
- Turn more planning responsibility over to large urbanized areas,
- Develop a more robust needs assessment process, and
- Improve the process for prioritizing projects.

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APPENDIXES A THROUGH J

Appendixes A through J of the research agency's final report are published online and can be found at http://trb.org/news/blurb_detail.asp?id=10134. These appendixes are as follows:

- Appendix A: Alaska DOT Coordinated Plan Materials
- Appendix B: Connecticut DOT Coordinated Plan Materials
- Appendix C: Oregon DOT Coordinated Plan Materials
- Appendix D: Texas DOT Coordinated Plan Materials
- Appendix E: Sample Coordinated Plan Contents
- Appendix F: NJ TRANSIT Coordinated Plan Materials
- Appendix G: Wisconsin DOT Coordinated Plan Materials
- Appendix H: Illinois DOT Coordinated Plan Materials
- Appendix I: Census Data Primer
- Appendix J: Additional Resources

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