

Mobility Management in Texas

Mobility management is an eligible capital expense supported by up to 80-percent Federal participation. Mobility management consists of short-range planning and management activities and projects for improving coordination among public transportation, other transportation service providers and agencies that do not provide transportation but serve people who need transportation services. It includes personnel and technology activities.

The Federal Transit Administration's (FTA) circulars allow mobility management to be funded as an eligible capital expense under Sections 5310, 5311, 5316, and 5317. The goals of mobility management are to build coordination among existing transportation providers and non-transportation providers who serve individuals that need transportation and to expand the availability of services to meet the public's unmet transportation needs.

Texas has made a concerted effort to embrace mobility management as an effective transportation coordination strategy. Just as the definition and goals of mobility management are very broad and diverse so are the mobility management projects in Texas.

The Texas investments in activities to support mobility management have included:

FY 08 - Texas funded with Rural Technical Assistance Program (RTAP) and Section 5304 funds ten statewide workshops including all of the designated 24 regional planning areas and their local workforce and health and human service partners. The benefit of these workshops was the networking of the different partners with planning for client transportation being the common thread.

FY 09 - Texas, in partnership with the Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA) hosted a state specific Transportation Coordination Institute – most of the seven projects resulting from the Institute have a mobility management component.

FY 10 - Texas has been awarded a United We Ride (UWR) Grant to groom and formally train mobility managers in four pilot sites, ultimately training workforce and health and human service case managers in the sites to include transportation early on in their process of case management activities. It is the intent to eventually roll this process out statewide.

To further encourage mobility management projects, Texas has developed a coordinated call for projects that includes six competitive funding streams: Section 5304 Planning, RTAP, Job Access Reverse Commute (JARC), New Freedom, Inter-City Bus and Rural Discretionary Funds. Mobility management is eligible for any of the funding streams and encouraged as innovation under the Rural Discretionary segment.

Since the inception of mobility management as a SAFETEA-LU strategy, Texas has hosted Jim McClary numerous times, as he provided the National Transportation Institute coordinated mobility class, as he provided the Texas specific coordinated mobility class funded through RTAP and he has participated in Mobility Management Town Hall Meetings conducted for local agencies whose clients needed transportation, local transit agencies and local elected officials in three locations, Wichita Falls, Midland/Odessa, and Austin.

The incorporation of these strategies has resulted in 15 of the 24 Texas regional planning areas having mobility management projects. Following are some examples:

- ✓ Texas projects that promote, enhance, and facilitate access to transportation services, including integrating and coordinating services for individuals with disabilities, older adults, and low income individuals include: **Panhandle Regional Planning Commission** is funding a mobility manager that is leading the research and development of a voucher program for seniors and persons with disabilities. The **Concho Valley Transit District** has partnerships with the Area Agency on Aging and local health and human services agencies to better facilitate rides for the elderly and disabled.

- ✓ Texas projects that support short term management activities to plan and implement coordinated services include: **North Central Texas Council of Governments (COG)** will be using several grass roots mobility managers that will develop local county based strategies that rollup into a major plan for the Dallas/Fort Worth Metroplex.
- ✓ Texas projects that support state and local coordination policy bodies and councils include the **Midland/Odessa MPO** which is housing the regional mobility manager to better coordinate services for their vast rural area.
- ✓ Texas projects that operate transportation brokerages to coordinate providers, funding agencies, and customers includes the **Harris County RIDES** project, funded with urbanized JARC, New Freedom and 5310 program funds – this project brokers rides for elderly and disabled outside of the Houston Metro area.
- ✓ Texas projects that provide coordination services, including customer-oriented travel navigator systems and neighborhood travel coordination activities include 3 local New Freedom projects in partnership with Independent Living Centers: **Panhandle Independent Living Center** in Amarillo and **VOLAR ILC** in El Paso provide travel training and trip planning – brokering trips for the local transit agencies for persons with disabilities. **Ft Bend County** provides transportation ambassadors as well as the travel training and trip planning for individuals with cognitive learning disabilities.
- ✓ Texas projects that are engaged in the development and operation of one-stop transportation traveler call centers to coordinate transportation information include the **East Texas Council of Governments** and the **Heart of Texas COG** are working on coordinating dispatch for all trips across all programs and transit agencies.
- ✓ Texas projects that include operational planning for the acquisition of intelligent transportation technologies includes the **LULAC Project Amistad** project that is implementing computer aided dispatch, Automatic Vehicle Location (AVL), Mobile Data Systems (MDT), and an automated fare card.
- ✓ The balance of the Texas projects established regional mobility managers or transportation brokerage activities. This includes supporting new mobility management and coordination programs among public transportation providers and other human service agencies providing transportation.

Some of the challenges encountered during implementation of mobility management strategies include:

- ♦ Long term funding for sustainability,
- ♦ Better communication to transportation providers, health and human service and workforce agencies of the value and flexibility of using mobility management coordination strategies,
- ♦ Local turf issues that arise from blending resources, customers and services etc,
- ♦ A resource pool of applicants qualified for mobility management positions and pay scales that adequately compensate individuals with the expertise and
- ♦ The need for transportation providers to actively/aggressively/consistently reach out to non-transportation agencies – health and human services agencies, work force agencies – and to become familiar with their respective missions, the services they provide, the transportation needs of the people these agencies serve, their gatekeepers/primary contacts.