

Identification of Service Gaps and Needs, Goals, and Strategies

The identification of needs and gaps is paramount to a coordinated transportation plan and a coordinated, ever improving system. The following is not an exhaustive list but represents a consensus from best practices. This list seeks to provide direction for funding and efforts to improve the current transportation system. Human service and public transportation are developed in response to increasing and specialized mobility needs. This section also contains possible strategies for Service Providers to use in order to fill identified gaps in service. Any agency providing or purchasing transportation for clients should consider this plan and its objectives when making decisions affecting transportation services. Agencies which plan on requesting grant money to provide transportation, or that may do so in the future, should take into account strategies and methods of coordination which involve communication, service, and possible resources.

Geographic

Gap: *Insufficient service in rural regions*

Goal: *Increase public service in un-served identified rural areas*

Strategy: *Development of more public service in Effingham County*

In rural areas of the state demand response is generally the only feasible and usable system type as fixed route systems are generally confined to urbanized areas. Effingham County is collaboratively engaged in phase 3 of the ICCT primer process, ultimately lead to a newly formed 5311 public provider of demand response service in that county.

Gap: *The ability to serve all population requesting demand response service*

Goal: *Increase general public demand response service within the Region*

Strategy: *Increased coordination, education and increased funding to offset costs*

All counties in Region 10 (except Effingham County until the completion of the primer process) currently have an agency that provides public demand response to its clients. There is a need for increased coordination, education and increased funding to offset costs within the Region to serve the populations requesting this service.

Service Provision

Gap: *Residents not receiving service due to service area boundary restrictions*

Goal: *Improve the lack of service outside of service areas*

Strategy: *Apply for increased DOAP money to fund a larger service area*

Gap: *Transportation access to employment is limited in some areas*

Goal: *Increase in employment related shuttles that accommodate all shifts*

Strategy: *Continue to provide community based shuttles that are time flexible*

Gap: *The cost of long distance trips makes it difficult for users to afford the trip*

Goal: *Reduce high cost associated with long trips*

Strategy: *Begin to collect data and resources for potential transfer stations and collaborate with neighboring transit providers to encourage ride sharing on long distance trips*

A frequent point of discussion is transportation outside of established service areas. Notable employment centers for region 10 include Evansville, IN & Paducah, KY as well as other cities such as Mt. Vernon. There are high costs associated with long distance trips and creative solutions are needed including linkages, coordination or better use of high volume routes.

Gap: Lack of assisting new riders and specialty groups to have access to using the transportation services
Goal: Development of Mobility Volunteer Transportation Network
Strategy: Implement My Trip Mobility Management principals at all levels

The volunteer network will assist in various kinds of service levels (door to door vs. door through door) for specialty groups. Specialty groups are individuals not able to ride on buses with the general public. The most often cited example is that of individuals with severe autism or a low functioning mental disability. These individuals may exhibit inappropriate or dangerous behavior and thus have been banned from public buses in the past or may require a personal aid. Although this does occur, it is not common and should not be misused as an excuse to not coordinate services.

My Trip Mobility Management	
Action	Find institutions willing to undertake and operate Mobility Management principals Develop database of volunteers Expand program to all rural areas of Illinois
Roles	Transportation Providers: Text Human Services Transportation Committee: Text HSTP Coordinators: Text
Timeframe	Ongoing
Priority	Intermediate
Cost	Existing operating dollars.
Funding Sources	5317 New Freedom Program
Considerations	Colleges and universities may have the needed resources and population base to organize such a program

Efficiency Gaps

Gap: Lack of advanced technology to support the transportation system and users
Goal: Continue to increase levels of technology including Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS)
Strategy: Implement user interface system for clients at an automated level post vehicle ITS implementation

Gap: Critical time being exhausted on dead head miles
Goal: Reduce dead head miles
Strategy: Implement shared scheduling tools to provide ride sharing among providers

There is a need to increase the efficiency of currently operated systems in order to ensure the continuation of funds of these services into the future. Coordination and sharing of services is the first

leg of creating greater efficiency. New efforts including Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) that is currently being implemented on the public level have been shown to increase efficiency in several ways as well as increase opportunities for coordination.

Investment in Communication Technology	
Action	Service providers should be encouraged to review their own need for increased technology, and also to consult other area providers to determine if a joint project might be warranted.
Roles	Transportation Providers: Identify needs; work with other providers to ensure that systems are compatible. Human Services Transportation Committee: Potentially HSTP Coordinators: Act as a resource
Timeframe	Depends on individual need and ability to access funds.
Priority	Moderate
Cost	Depends on individual provider
Funding Sources	Section 5317 specifically allows for communications technology improvements. Funds could also come from Section 5311, DOAP, or other funding streams.

Medical Transportation Gaps

Gap: *Insufficient transportation options for non-emergency medical trips*

Goal: *Increase access to transportation for non-emergency medical trips in the Region*

Strategy: *Improve coordination with ambulance companies, hospitals and insurance companies, increase rides home for patients brought to hospitals in ambulances, and obtain non-emergency stretcher vehicles.*

The need to increase transportation for medical trips is one of the most widely and often discussed topics in the Region and is a most dire need for some transit disadvantaged individuals. Some rural counties often have only one ambulance vehicle and it is imperative that the transportation service providers work closely with the medical field (hospitals, medical offices, and ambulance) to increase access to non-emergency medical needs for the residents.

Education Gap

Gap: *Lack of public unawareness and false impressions of public transportation*

Goal: *Educate the masses in regards to rural public transportation through public outreach*

Strategy: *Educate wherever possible including but not limited to medical facilities, religious institutions, and educational facilities through speaking presentations, flyers, and marketing tactics.*

Providers feel that increased public education on available transportation options would help increase ridership. It seems that that too many residents who might need human service transportation do not access it because they are not aware of what options exist in their area and may be intimidated by trying to access these services. It is imperative as we move forward to share viable information among providers, increase marketing tactics to promote awareness, and continue to improve communication and coordination.

Promotion of Transportation Options

Action	Transportation providers are encouraged to look into such options as public service announcements, newspaper ads and educate through public outreach.
Roles	Transportation Providers: Look into free advertisement from Radio Stations, colleges in the region, and advertise at potential trip generators: Such as DHS Offices, Senior Centers, and Dr. Offices. Human Services Transportation Committee: Be active in the community education by networking. HSTP Coordinators: Provide education by moving to a mobility management role.
Timeframe	Ongoing
Priority	High
Cost	Depends on type of method used
Funding Sources	Any request for funding, especially operating dollars or capital funding for expanded services, should include in it a plan to broadly promote transportation options to the general public.