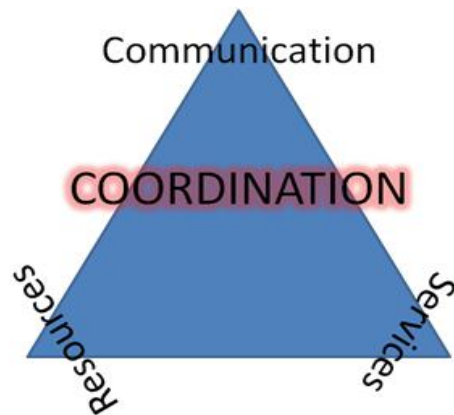


# Identification of Service Gaps and Needs\Goals\Strategies and Implementation

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 discussions held during HSTC meetings, as well as possible strategies for service providers to use in order to fill gaps in service. This list seeks to provide direction for funding and efforts to improve the current transportation system and any agency providing or purchasing transportation for clients should consider this plan and its objectives when making decisions affecting transportation services. Each identified gap represents an area for improvement within the existing transportation system. All organizations which provide transportation are urged use the strategies listed or share, with the Committee, any best practice strategies that will meet the needs presented by the identified gaps. 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. Requests for Federal funding from Sections 5310, 5316 and 5317 which meet the needs outlined below will receive a more favorable score than projects which do not address an identified gap in service. Each general gap is followed by a goal, strategy for achieving the goal & closing the gap, and a quick description of the problem.

## **Gap 1-Lack of coordination among existing providers**

- Goal - Coordinate transportation among existing providers.
- *Strategies to accomplish this goal include:*
  1. *Provide travel training and coordinate with social service agencies to train able riders to use the local mass transit system when available instead of providing services through a paratransit service.*
  2. *Negotiate fares with social service agencies for passengers who utilize the paratransit service.*
  3. *Periodically review funded vehicles and stated need*



Although many counties now have countywide public transit, funding issues restrict full service of rural areas. Increased coordination, in various forms, between all transportation providers doesn't necessarily mean following one particular path. It does mean having providers come together and discuss what options might exist to reduce costs, increase the number of trips that can be completed, increase efficiency so that limited dollars can do more, and improve the quality of life for those who are served by transportation, and those who are currently unable to be served.

Some strategies to consider, a network of volunteers willing to provide training to residents that would increase transportation options and availability to underserved population. The MY

TRIP program has materials available for training the trainer and incorporating a regional bank of volunteers that would be available to do one-on-one training with riders.

Service contracts are another way for providers to collaborate with each other to negotiate reasonable fares, establish new or improve current routes and service contracts usually save DHS providers money.

Also, if agencies wish to access federal transportation dollars or have a need to provide transportation for clients the 5310 CVP (Consolidated Vehicle Procurement) process would be a beneficial resource. Agencies must attend and participate in RTC (Regional Transportation Committee) meetings and give input into the HSTP planning process. During the application & endorsement process a review of a provider's current vehicle status, new requests, and need would be done to determine if effective and efficient services are being provided.

It is hoped that greater participation with the HSTC will lead to a better environment for coordination. It will help to provide service and guidance needed to coordinate or improve current services. And, agencies will use the committee in order to network and collaborate on possible new demand for routes.

### **Gap 2-Lack of transportation for medical services**

- Goal - Increase transportation for health care purposes
- *Strategies to accomplish this goal include:*
  1. *Increasing the coordination between social service agencies, this will allow transit agencies to provide services to more individuals.*

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.

Coordinated services could include performing gather-type trips for passengers traveling to a common medical\health care destination. For example, common drop off locations would be established for multiple passengers that would allow one bus to pick up those passengers and travel to the common destination. (i.e.; St. Louis)

It is also 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. Also, in some regions providers are obtaining stretcher vehicles which are a benefit to the ambulance services, transit providers & persons needing emergency assistance.

### **Gap 3-Lack of county-through-county services**

- *Goal - Coordinate transportation throughout counties*
- *Strategies to accomplish this goal include:*
  1. *Coordinate between counties and develop transfer locations to minimize the number of vehicles used to complete trips*

Providers and human services agencies have frequently discussed the high demand for transportation into the St. Louis Metro, Effingham and Springfield areas. All providers have indicated that they travel to these areas on a frequent basis. This could be done more

effectively & maximize transportation budgets by establishing common areas or transfer stations that riders could easily get to (by paratransit, if needed) and be transported either to their destination or to another transfer station. A system using a website that would map each providers trips, other internet based tools, networking sites, or ITS would need to be implemented thus creating a source of communication and linkages to efficiently run county-through-county services.

#### **Gap 4-Need for extended service hours**

- *Goal - Temporal gaps in service (provide transportation during evening and weekend hours)*
- *Strategies to accomplish this goal include:*
  1. *Develop a study in those areas to determine the level service that may be provided based on population density*
  2. *Determine what area does not provide weekend/evening services*

Extended service hours have long been a discussion in Region 9. At this time, some transit agencies provide extended hours trips for purposes such as employment. Some human service agencies have transportation available 24\7 for client based needs. Coordination efforts could combine the two services but it must be determined if communities have a true need for extended services. One way to get this information would be for all providers to work together, possibly thru the HSTP Committee, to develop a survey that would be distributed to current riders & potential riders in each county. This would provide a prospective of what the need truly is. The Provider Inventory section of the HSTP Plan would show the hours of service, service area and other helpful information of each provider that could assist in getting the coordination process started in the communities that are determined to have need.