

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 to 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 for transportation services, or that may plan to 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.

Geographic Gaps

Gap: *Lack of general public demand response service in St. Clair County*

Goal: *Develop a demand response transportation service for rural St. Clair County*

Strategy: *Research potential solutions, create interest group, and begin primer process*

St. Clair County currently has fixed route service in urbanized areas considered part of the St. Louis Metropolitan area provided by the public provider St. Clair County Transit District (SCCTD) and paratransit services for eligible citizens provided by the non-profit Alternative Transportation System (ATS), but lacks a public use demand response system in the county. This Gap affects mostly the sparsely populated rural area of the county which does not have access to either the fixed route or a demand response system. There is a need for greater coordination of all the providers within St. Clair County and the presence of a 5311 or DOAP provider to serve populations outside of the urbanized St. Louis Metropolitan area. The breakdown for rural and urban is not available, but roughly 39,000 people (approx. 1/3 of those employed) from St. Clair county commute to Madison County or across the Mississippi River into St. Louis. It is also likely that high numbers of individuals living in rural St. Clair County commute into the urbanized portions of the county.

Coordination Gaps

Gap: *Lack of coordination among transit and service providers*

Goal: Increase coordination through communication, vehicle sharing, and service contracts

Strategy: Utilize the HSTP blog site, increase vehicle sharing, and educate providers on service contracts and begin to develop contracts

There are varying levels of coordination including communication, resource sharing, and system consolidation. Many agencies have difficulty with this because it may mean a loss of autonomy, territory, or control. Other barriers to coordination include funding or regulation differences, political or geographic boundaries, or even perceived service constraints. Agencies should always start with communication and seek a coordination solution that fits well with all stakeholders involved. Service contracts are a method of coordination that ensures services are provided within terms that everyone agrees upon without ongoing service duplication. The key element is to increase participation and encourage learning activities at Committee meetings to better understand these options.

Increase HSTP Participation	
Action	Agencies who wish to access federal transportation dollars, or who have a need to provide transportation for clients should attend and participate in HSTC meetings and give input into the HSTP planning process.
Roles	<p><i>Transportation Providers:</i> Invite other service providers and human service agencies within service area to meetings.</p> <p><i>Human Services Transportation Committee:</i> Suggest potential gaps in services to the coordinators, contact individuals or agencies that might be willing to serve on the HSTC.</p> <p><i>HSTP Coordinators:</i> Continue to send invitations to meetings to identified stakeholders, work with existing contacts to identify potential new members.</p>
Timeframe	Ongoing
Priority	High
Cost	Minimal
Funding Sources	Already programmed within coordinator budget
Considerations	Increased participation in the Regional Transportation Committee is a key priority for the region. Gaps in representation need to be addressed. It is hoped that greater participation in the HSTC will lead to a better environment for coordination and Bringing more ideas for future projects would be brought forward.

Coordination Services	
Action	May include but not limited to the following; Sharing vehicles, agreeing to pick up

	excess demand from other providers during off-peak hours, utilizing service contracts to provide transportation, develop a ride sharing program where providers will agree to complete trips from other providers which are along the same route as existing service and combined dispatch centers, allowing multiple agencies to coordinate transportation and share the expenses associated with intelligent transportation systems (ITS).
Roles	<i>Transportation Providers:</i> Participation at all levels <i>Human Services Transportation Committee:</i> Identifying where these efforts could be implemented and encourage the efforts <i>HSTP Coordinators:</i> Support providers and be a resource
Timeframe	Ongoing
Priority	High
Cost	Variable based on project
Funding Sources	5310
Considerations	Coordination 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.

Development of Service Contracts between Public and Private Partners	
Action	For niche providers to be able to show cost savings on contracts
Roles	<i>Transportation Providers:</i> To obtain routes when feasible for both transportation partners <i>Human Services Transportation Committee:</i> Provided possible contacts for service contract by community involvement and networking. <i>HSTP Coordinators:</i> Potentially link between transportation providers about cost and service and potential of contracts.
Timeframe	Ongoing
Priority	Medium
Cost	Depending on existing levels of services, additional capital and operational funds may be needed.
Funding Sources	Development of service contracts will build local-match dollars for transportation providers.
Considerations	For niche provider to take into account that transportation service contracts usually save DHS providers money

Develop Partnerships to Share Vehicles

Action	Develop possibilities and avenues for vehicle sharing
Roles	<i>Transportation Providers:</i> Look into vehicle insurance pools <i>Human Services Transportation Committee:</i> establish ideas and possibilities for billing, insurance, and liability solutions <i>HSTP Coordinators:</i> Source of information of what has occurred that has encourages resource sharing.
Timeframe	Ongoing
Priority	Low
Cost	Cost of running vehicles
Funding Sources	Section 5310
Considerations	By sharing vehicles and overhead costs, new routes could possibly be established with shared cost lowering risk for both transportation providers. Service providers have indicated that most providers are open to the idea given that liability and insurance issues would have to be resolved. For smaller providers who may have only 1 or 2 vehicles, a maintenance issue might result in the loss of services and possibly sharing.

Service Provision Gaps

Gap: Lack of employment related shuttles

Goal: Identify and increase shuttles that accommodate employment of all shifts

Strategy: Apply for JARC funding to increase shuttle service in identified areas

Job Access Reverse Commute funding is available to providers that are interested in providing service for employment activities. In Region 11 there is specific data that encourages the need for shuttles. For example, Monroe County census data shows that 14,392 residents of the county are employed, with only 7,535 jobs in the county. While 5,367 Monroe County residents work within Monroe County, over 8,200 residents work outside the county. In Randolph County, nearly 2,300 residents commute to the St. Louis region each day.

Develop Job Access Transportation	
Action	Transportation providers are encouraged to find projects which could potentially utilize Section 5316, Job Access-Reverse Commute funds
Roles	<i>Transportation Providers:</i> Research community, possible new projects/contracts. <i>Human Services Transportation Committee:</i> JARC projects should be discussed <i>HSTP Coordinators:</i> Provide knowledge and assistance with the process
Timeframe	It is anticipated
Priority	High
Cost	Depends on projects
Funding Sources	Section 5316
Considerations	Section 5316 (Job Access/Reverse Commute) funds can be used for funding new job access programs in rural areas. JARC funds could also be used to expand existing services to cover evening or weekend hours, allowing for job access by those who work nontraditional hours.

Gap: Lack of mobility assistants or personal aids and special transit needs for some specialty groups

Goal: Increase opportunity for specialty groups to ride public transportation

Strategy: Apply for New freedom funds to support the cost of mobility assistance and begin implementing My Trip principals at all levels of service

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 not to coordinate services.

My Trip/ Volunteer Network	
Action	Find institutions willing to undertake and operate an ongoing volunteer network (known as Transit Buddies), develop database of volunteers, expand program to all rural areas of Illinois, implement the MY TRIP guide for the creation of regional volunteer transportation networks
Roles	Transportation Providers: Implement My trip at all levels Human Services Transportation Committee: Encourage the use of My Trip principals HSTP Coordinators: Educate providers and public on My Trip initiatives
Timeframe	Ongoing
Priority	Intermediate
Cost	Existing operating dollars
Funding Sources	5317 New Freedom Program
Considerations	A network of volunteers willing to provide rider assistance to residents of rural areas would increase transportation options to underserved populations. As an example, a volunteer program could focus on the varying needs of the elderly or disabled when accessing transportation. Actions leading to such a program could include a volunteer database and the implementation of MY TRIP.

Cost Gap

Gap: Lack of funding to keep cost low for both riders and providers

Goal: Keep fares affordable while maintaining provider solvency

Strategy: Continue to apply for funding opportunities while decreasing expenses through coordination efforts with neighboring providers

Low income populations and other groups may not have the resources to find adequate transportation services. There are many categories of low-income groups including fixed income, single mothers, unemployed and others. By keeping fares affordable these groups, which are often not covered by funding programs, may be able to better manage their transportation needs. Some providers indicated that existing funding levels were not adequate, and that as a result they have had to decline requests for

service because of lack of available resources. While nearly all of Region 11 is covered by one or more service providers, that doesn't necessarily mean that these providers are able to meet all demands. While ideally more money for transportation will be made available in the future, providers must plan to become more efficient in order to reduce costs per trip.

Efficiency Gaps

Gap: Current lack of affordable technology that may increase efficiency for providers

Goal: Increase level of technology through implementing Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS)

Strategy: Seek funding to implement ITS, possible multi-agency grant applications to increase funding opportunities, and coordinated compatible software systems to be used later as one system if desired.

Often one of the first questions asked during the formation of a new public transit system is if the funding is going to continue. Such concerns are not unfounded. Government grants and agency funding do face challenges in light of record deficits in both state and federal budgets. However, the need for transportation is recognized and funding sources have been, so far, stable. There is still a need to increase the efficiency of currently operated systems in order to ensure the continuation 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) 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.
Considerations	Inefficiencies in transportation are a major barrier to increased services. Labor costs associated with scheduling trips takes away dollars that could be invested in rolling stock or drivers. Improved communication systems between vehicles and dispatching centers, along with communication between providers would enable the more efficient operation of existing services. Agencies wishing to invest in ITS systems or other new technologies should be aware of what systems other agencies use, and should study the possibility of either sharing the costs associated with these systems or ensure that the systems are compatible so that future coordination is possible.

Gap: Documented unnecessary dead head miles and identified duplication in services

Goal: Decrease dead head miles and duplication in services if any arise in the future

Strategy: Coordinate long distance trips with neighboring providers and develop transfer stations

In efforts to reduce dead head miles it is imperative to coordinate long distance rides with neighboring transportation providers. One way this can be accomplished is by implementing transfer stations to reduce the trip length. Efforts with DHS and IDOT must be a priority to achieve this goal specifically for medical transportation (see below). Also, service contracts for one provider to meet billing requirements from DHS would create a solution for some deadhead miles.

Medical Transportation Gaps

Gap: Lack of transportation options for non-emergency transportation

Goal: Increase non-emergency transportation trips and educate the potential options

Strategy: Education and 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 at this region's HSTC meetings and is a most dire need for some transit disadvantaged individuals. As one of the largest urban centers in the United States, St. Louis has specialized health care centers and transportation facilities that cannot be found elsewhere in Southern Illinois. One approach to this matter would be advocacy for legislative changes in Medicaid rules to pay transit providers.

Gap: Lack of routes to urbanized areas and along major corridors where medical facilities are located

Goal: Increase routes to metro St. Louis and along major commercial corridors

Strategy: Expand service to these areas by increased funding options and coordination with medical facilities

The demand for transportation into St. Louis extends beyond counties that border the St. Louis Metro Area. Many transportation providers also have discussed the need for transportation into St. Louis from other parts of the region. Providers in the southern and eastern counties of the region have indicated that there is demand (and in many cases, such as medical appointments, a genuine need) for transportation into the St. Louis region. There are high costs associated with completing these trips, and many feel that at the present time it is a misallocation of resources. Also, corridors are home to many hotels, restaurants, services, large retailers, specialty shops, medical centers, government facilities and entertainment options. Transportation to and from these commercial centers would greatly impact the economic growth of the region as well as quality of life for the residents.