

GREENE COUNTY, NC

COORDINATED PUBLIC
TRANSPORTATION
AND HUMAN SERVICES
TRANSPORTATION PLAN

Public Forum, Held 24 February 2009
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By the Greene County Transportation Advisory Board

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Federal Regulatory Background

For more than twenty years, the federal and state governments have been working to better coordinate human service transportation activities it funds.

In 1985, during an oversight hearing on Rural Transportation, Congress heard testimony prompted by concerns of the lack of federal coordination between programs, such as the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the Department of Transportation (DOT).

Aiming to better coordinate activities, the Secretaries of HHS and DOT signed an agreement establishing the Joint DOT/HHS Coordinating Council on Human Service Transportation (CCHST) in 1986. Since the CCHST's creation, the CCHST has concentrated efforts to identify barriers to coordinated transportation. At one time, the agencies identified sixty-four factors that transportation and human service representatives believed were barriers to transportation coordination. Barriers included uncertainty regarding federal responsibilities for transportation, fragmented accounting and reporting procedures, uncertainty in using resources for recipients other than program constituents, and prohibition against charging fares under the Older Americans Act.

To further support coordination, Congress included several provisions in its 1998 passage of the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA –21), Public Law (PL) 105-178. Most notable was the provision to require Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC), predecessor program to today's JARC program, projects to be part of a coordinated public transit–human services transportation planning process.

In February 2004, President George W. Bush released an Executive Order on Human Service Transportation Coordination to improve assistance to those who are transportation disadvantaged. The Executive Order aims to implement coordination of transportation services to operate in the most cost effective and time efficient manner possible.

Within the February 2004 Executive Order, the President established the Inter agency Transportation Coordinating Council on Access and Mobility (CCAM).

The functions of the CCAM are to:

- Promote inter agency cooperation
- Establish appropriate mechanisms to minimize duplication and overlap of federal programs and services so that transportation-disadvantaged persons have access to more transportation services
- Facilitate access to the most appropriate, cost-effective transportation services within existing resources
- Encourage enhanced customer access to the variety of transportation and resources available
- Formulate and implement administrative, policy, and procedural mechanisms that enhance transportation services at all levels

CCAM includes leadership from eleven federal departments:

- DOT
- HHS
- Labor
- Education
- Housing and Urban Affairs
- Agriculture
- Justice

- Interior
- Veterans Administration
- Social Security Administration
- National Council on Disabilities

In May 2005, the CCAM issued a report to the President with recommendations for breaking down federal barriers to transportation for all transportation-disadvantaged populations. The report detailed action plans for each of the eleven federal agencies who comprise the CCAM. Additionally, in 2005 the CCAM launched the United We Ride website, www.unitedweride.gov.

While it has been a long process, the federal government is working to strengthen its coordination requirements for human service transportation activities. In August 2005, Congress included coordination provisions in the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, and Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), PL 109-059. SAFETEA-LU specifically added a coordination requirement to the newly created Elderly Individuals and Individuals with Disabilities Program (5310), Job Access Reverse Commute Program (5316), and New Freedoms Program (5317). FTA requires projects funded through the Section 5310, 5316, and 5317 Programs be derived from a locally developed Coordinated Human Service Transportation Plan (CPT-HSTP).

A CPT-HSTP identifies the transportation needs of individuals with disabilities, older adults, and people with low incomes. It provides strategies for meeting local needs, and prioritizes transportation services for funding and implementation. A CPT-HSTP uses all available resources to supply transportation services efficiently and without redundancy in trips. Development of the CPT-HSTP must have the input and cooperation of transit agencies, social service agencies, community agencies, and the public.

In 2006, the CCAM issued two policy statements that take important steps to bring federal programs together to help people with disabilities, older adults, and lower income families get the transportation they need for their day-to-day mobility.

The CCAM policy statements focus on two key areas: (1) coordinated human service transportation planning and (2) vehicle sharing. These policies support communities and organizations receiving federal funding to plan transportation services together and to share resources. The policies were included as part of the recommendations in a 2005 report to the White House on Human Service Transportation Coordination. Each department on the CCAM will be taking actions to implement these policies.

Plan Approach

Projects funded through the Transportation for Elderly Persons and Persons with Disabilities (Section 5310), Job Access and Reverse Commute (Section 5316 - JARC) and New Freedom (Section 5317) programs require the development of a local, coordinated public transit-human services plan (CPT-HSTP), which should incorporate private and non-profit transportation and human services providers and the general public.

The Eastern Carolina Rural Transportation Planning Organization (ECRPO) provided the Greene County Transportation (GCT) Advisory Board with a facilitator. The ECRPO facilitator and the Director of the GCT worked together to plan a public meeting to discuss the transportation needs of the citizens of Greene County. It was decided that one workshop would be held on February 24, 2009 at 2:00 PM (the day and time of a scheduled Transportation Advisory Board meeting) to give all stakeholders in the community who had an interest in transportation an opportunity to identify the needs and gaps in the current transportation service and to provide input into the Local Coordinated Plan.

Those participating in the workshop represented a broad array of interests including elected officials, county management staff, Greene County Transportation Advisory Board members, local public and human service transportation provider, county social service agencies, and veterans. In all twenty-six (26) participants attended the workshop. They included representatives of:

- Greene County Commissioner
- Greene County Manager
- Greene County Assistant Manager (Planning/Economic Development)

- Faith Based Organizations
- Greene County Health Department
- Greene County Department of Social Services
- Disabled American Veterans/Veterans Affairs
- NC Employment Security Commission
- Greene County Transportation Director
- Members of the Greene County Transportation Advisory Board
- Greene County Senior Services Director
- Greene County Council on Aging
- Greene County Schools
- Lenoir Community College
- Greene County Emergency Services
- Greene County Vocational Rehabilitation
- Greene County Job Link Center
- Private citizens

Demographics

Background

The following information was taken from Greene County's website and describes the county:

Greene County is 265 square miles and has a Census 2000 population density of 71.6 persons per square mile. The almost forgotten pace and homespun geniality of small town America is still a way of life in Greene County, NC. Located in beautiful eastern North Carolina in the middle of the coastal plain, Greene County is bordered by Goldsboro, Greenville, Kinston and Wilson making major shopping malls and rich cultural activities only a 15-25 minute drive. The county is also at the heart of the planned Global TransPark, the most innovative technology and transportation project ever.

The county seat, Snow Hill, is the largest town and major commercial center in the county. The town draws its name from the historic white sandy banks of nearby Contentnea Creek. Among the towns and communities in the county are Hookerton, Maury, and Walstonburg. These old established communities are relatively self-enduring and traditionally stable.

Recreational activities such as little league baseball, senior Olympics, tennis courts and intramural sports are available. In neighboring counties there are driving ranges, golf courses and numerous other recreational opportunities. Greene County is less than 2 hours from North Carolina's Crystal Coast and only about 1 1/2 hours from Oriental, the sailing capital of the world. East Carolina University with its many concerts, plays and other cultural events is less than a 30 minute drive.

The small school system provides a good, quality education. Courses leading to a concentration in college prep, tech prep and job ready areas are available. The county also hosts a branch of Lenoir Community College.

Apartments and single family homes are available in Snow Hill as well as in small communities all around Greene County. Contentnea Creek flows through the county and helps to add to the beautiful countryside. With a population just under 20,000 people, Greene County has room for both the rugged individualist and those who like being a part of the community.

Health care in Greene County is limited to the Health Department, Greene County Healthcare, Inc., assisted living facilities, nursing homes and private providers. Citizens needing specialized treatment and hospitalization are referred outside the county. Veterans eligible for Veterans Administration services must be transported to clinics out of the county or to the VA hospital in Durham, NC.

Although, a largely agricultural area, Greene County still has a growing industrial community. More industry is expected as the Global TransPark begins to take shape and grow. The county is home to a wide variety of thriving industries whose products enjoy national and international distribution. These include: electronic capacitors, metal fabrication, marine trades, food processing and automotive parts manufacturing. Agriculture also plays an important role in Greene County. Along with traditional products such as tobacco, corn, cotton and livestock, Greene County's farmers have found new sources of revenue in value added agricultural ventures such as produce and organically raised livestock. In addition, the abundance of colleges, community colleges, and universities in the surrounding area provide a well-trained workforce with a solid work ethic.

North Carolina law calls for the 40 most distressed counties to become Tier 1 counties, the middle 40 counties to be designated as Tier 2 and the 20 most prosperous counties to become Tier 3 counties. The rankings are based on an

assessment of each county's unemployment rate, median household income, population growth and assessed property value per capita. In addition, any county with a population of less than 12,000 or a county with a population of fewer than 50,000 residents with 19 percent or more of those people living below the federal poverty level automatically are designated as one of the 40 most distressed counties. Greene County is a Tier 1 county (lowest).

Another factor that comes into play when discussing county transportation services is the ability to pay rating (ATP). The ATP rating is based on a scoring range from 0 to 100 where 0 is considered to be a municipality or county having the least capacity for financially contributing to a project. Conversely, a 100 means a unit of local government has the greatest capacity for making a monetary commitment. Municipalities will be compared with other municipalities and counties with other counties.

There are three factors used to calculate an ATP score:

1. Population
2. Per capita income
3. Tax valuation

Population, per capita income and tax valuation are each scored on a 0 to 100 basis for each potential applicant. Using population as an example, the town or city having the largest population would receive a score of 100. A town with a population half way between the smallest and the largest populations would receive 50 points. Per capita income and tax valuation are scored in the same manner. The scoring results from these three areas are averages to arrive at a final ATP score. Greene County's ATP rating for 2007-2008 is 5.57 (out of a possible score of 100—ranked 13th lowest out of 100 counties).

Census & Statistical Data

This data was taken from the NC State Demographer’s website.

	Pop. 2007	65+ 2007	% 65+	Avg. age
Greene County	21,110	2,499	11.8%	35.85
Hookerton	484			
Snow Hill	1,514			
Walstonburg	224			
Unincorporated	18,888			

Greene County	Pop. 2030	65+ 2030	% 65+	Avg. Age
	25,238	4,166	16.5%	37.69

The Census 2000 information shows 6, 696 households with 2.65 persons per household. The population of Greene County in 2000 was 51.8% white, 41.2% black and 7% other. The median household income in 2000 was \$32,074 and the per capita income in 2000 was \$15,452. The poverty rate in 2000 was 20.2% mirroring the elderly poverty rate which was 20.5%. Fifteen percent (15.8%) of the population receive food stamps (NC DHHS 2006). Sixty-two percent (62.7%) of the working age population were employed at the time of the 2000 Census.

A discussion of the transportation needs in Greene County would not be complete without statistical information on the disabled population. In the 2000 Census 24.6% of the population over the age of five reported disabilities. The following Census 2000 tables give details on that population:

Population 16 to 64 years	11,459
With a disability	2,662
Percent with a disability	23.2
Sensory	278
Physical	936
Mental	445
Self-care	253
Going outside the home	1,079
Employment disability	1,618

Population 65 years and over	2,109
With a disability	1,129
Percent with a disability	53.5
Sensory	359
Physical	789
Mental	423
Self-care	303
Going outside the home	545
Population 18 to 34 years	3,956
With a disability	791
Percent enrolled in college or graduate school	4.8
Percent not enrolled and with a bachelor's degree or higher	1.1
No disability	3,165
Percent enrolled in college or graduate school	11.0
Percent not enrolled and with a bachelor's degree or higher	6.8
Population 21 to 64 years	10,275
With a disability	2,452
Percent employed	54.1
No disability	7,823
Percent employed	73.8

According to Census 2000 there are 1,376 veterans in Greene County. Veterans eligible for Veterans Administration services need transportation to clinics in Morehead City and Greenville as well as transportation to the VA hospital in Durham, NC.

The mean travel time to work is 27.6 minutes (Census) and of the 7,501 people who worked outside the home, 5,939 (79.1%) drove a vehicle alone, 1,393 (18.6%) carpooled, 8 rode motorcycles, 8 biked, 55 walked and 71 reported other means of getting to work. Of those commuting to work, 2,726 traveled to jobs within the county and 4,858 had jobs outside the county.

Analysis

Because of Greene County's low ability to pay rating, it will be difficult for the county itself, if nothing changes, to meet the full range of transportation needs of its citizens now and in the future.

Of the citizens in Greene County over the age of 5, 24.6% are disabled. In the population range of 16 to 64, 986 citizens have physical disabilities and 278 have

sensory disabilities. Of those 65 and older 53.5% have some sort of disability, 789 have a physical disability and 359 have a sensory disability. Many of those citizens would need transportation assistance, especially as they age.

The poverty rate and the elderly poverty rate are at around 20%. Fifteen percent (15.8%) of the population are on food stamps. This population is most in need of transportation.

The elderly (65+) represent 11.8% of the present county population and will grow to 16.5% in 2030 according to the NC Demographer. A growing elderly population means more need for transportation. The elderly also have a high percentage of disabilities, increasing the need to these services for more than just medical-related transportation.

Inventory of Public Transportation Service and Community Transportation Services

Greene County Transportation

Greene County Transportation (GCT) was established by the Board of County Commissioners on July 1, 1999 to provide transportation for the human service agencies of Greene County and to the general public. The creation of this department was made possible through an agreement between the County of Greene and the North Carolina Department of Transportation, Public Transportation Division.

Through this agreement, Federal and State funds are provided annually to the County to offset local administrative and capital operating costs. The County Transportation Department provides a "dial-a-ride" or "demand/response" type service to all residents of Greene County when there is space available. Human Service agency clients have priority over the general public passenger.

There is a fee for all passenger transportation. The Greene County Transportation System offers service to medical appointments in Greenville and Kinston Monday through Thursday for Medicaid passengers only. Service to Lenoir Community College and job sites in Kinston is available for TANF Work First clients only. Service to and from most destinations in Greene County are available daily Monday through Friday except county holidays for all citizens. As a general rule, during periods of inclement weather, if the Greene County Schools are closed, the GCT vans do not operate. There may be exceptions to this policy. In the event of a disaster, all scheduled transportation services will be suspended.

All out-of-county medical appointments should be scheduled between the hours of 9:30 a.m. and 11:00 a.m. The Transportation Department's office hours are 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. Monday - Friday. There is a 24 hour answering machine operating after office hours.

Passengers must call for reservations a minimum of 48 hours (two working days) prior to requested pickup time. The GCT not only travels within the county, but outside as well. Service to Greenville, Kinston and Farmville for medical appointments is available Monday through Thursday. Passengers needing assistance other than just entering or exiting the van must make their own arrangements for assistance or provide an aide to ride with them.

Children under the age of 8 or 80 pounds are required to have a child seat provided. GCT does not provide child safety seats or mobility devices such as wheelchairs.

The GCT has a policy on "No Shows." If the vehicle stops at the scheduled time and pickup point two times within a 30-day period with no response, the transportation service for that passenger will be suspended for 60 days. A third "no show" will result in termination of the service for a period of 12 months.

The GCT charges \$1.55 per van mile for transportation. The per van mile is divided by the number of passengers for the total round-trip mileage for a specific run. Specific agencies or funding sources sponsor all passengers that ride GCT vans. These agencies include:

- Medicaid (medical)
- Work First (employment/educational)
- NCDOT EDTAP (Elderly & Disabled Transportation Assistance Program)
- NCDOT Work First
- Congregate Nutrition (meal site)

- NCDOT Rural General Public (RGP)
- Greene Lamp, Inc. WIA Program
- Health Department

The NCDOT RGP funds are intended to provide assistance for individuals who are not Human Services Agency clients. These funds may be used to provide up to 90% of a passenger trip. The remaining 10% must be covered by passenger fares or a local match. Due to limited RGP funds, RGP service is available for in-county trips only. The RGP funds in Greene County originally were used as a follow-up means of subsidizing a Work First or Welfare-to-Work client's needs for transportation after they have successfully completed those programs and are ineligible for Work First (TANF) transportation services. Now RGP funds are used for any citizen requesting service in Greene County that is not eligible for a human service agency program.

General public passengers can pay a minimal fee for a trip. In February 2009, the minimum cost per trip for the RGP passenger is \$1 and the maximum cost per trip for the RGP passenger has been set at \$3. Any passenger requesting monthly transportation arrangements will be required to pay the trip rate for 20 days in advance.

Greene County Transportation operated 310 days during FY 07-08, drove 175,059 miles and provided 20,159 trips for 350 different passengers.

GCT's vehicle inventory consists of 3 wheelchair lift vans, 1 minivan, 2-15 passenger vans and 1-12 passenger van. (vehicles are 2002-2007 models)

GCT currently only provides Dialysis service only Saturdays.

GCT provides out-of-county service for Medicaid and TANF Work First passengers only.

Limited funding prohibits out of county service for the general public or non-agency sponsored riders.

Other transportation services in the county

While Greene County Transportation provides the bulk of public transportation in the county, there are agencies and others that also provide limited transportation. Here is a list of those providers:

- Greene County Social Services (used county van and vouchers for family or friends to transport)
- Public School bus service (K-12)
- Student Health Services of Greene County Health Care (private)
- EMS (911 emergency service)
- Private ambulances transport non-ambulatory individuals
- Churches (events, services)
- Day Care/Head Start
- 4H
- Assisted living facilities/nursing homes
- Migrant farm worker transportation

What is noteworthy is that these services are “stove piped” in that the funding streams dictate the uses of the vehicles and transportation services provided. If one were able to just throw all the transportation money used in the county for other than private vehicle transportation into a pot, one would probably have adequate funding to provide a first rate transportation system.

There are no private taxis or private limo services (luxury or airport service) in Greene County.

While not necessarily mass transit, one cannot have a discussion about transportation without mentioning walking and biking. Providing user-friendly sidewalks, walking trails, proper bike lanes, and/or multi-purpose lanes throughout the county would encourage the use of these facilities. At this time few of these facilities exist making it dangerous for most to walk or bike. There is one walking club that has formed to “DeFeet” Childhood Obesity and to improve the overall health of county residents.

General Program Information

FTA Section 5310, 5316 and 5317 Programs require that projects be derived from a locally-developed CPT-HSTP. This chapter discusses the specific goals, who can apply, examples of eligible projects, potential funding, and the Designated Recipient (DR).

Transportation for Elderly Persons and Persons with Disabilities Section 5310

This program (49 U.S.C. 5310) provides formula funding to States for the purpose of assisting private nonprofit groups in meeting the transportation needs of the elderly and persons with disabilities when the transportation service provided is unavailable, insufficient, or inappropriate to meeting these needs. Funds are apportioned based on each State’s share of population for these groups of people.

Funds are obligated based on the annual program of projects included in a statewide grant application. The State agency ensures that local applicants and project activities are eligible and in compliance with Federal requirements, that private not-for-profit transportation providers have an opportunity to participate as feasible, and that the program provides for as much coordination of federally assisted transportation services, assisted by other Federal sources. Once FTA

approves the application, funds are available for state administration of its program and for allocation to individual sub-recipients within the state.

Job Access and Reverse Commute Section 5316

The Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) program was established to address the unique transportation challenges faced by welfare recipients and low-income persons seeking to obtain and maintain employment. Many new entry-level jobs are located in suburban areas, and low-income individuals have difficulty accessing these jobs from their inner city, urban, or rural neighborhoods. In addition, many entry level-jobs require working late at night or on weekends when conventional transit services are either reduced or non-existent. Finally, many employment related-trips are complex and involve multiple destinations including reaching childcare facilities or other services.

The JARC program funds transportation projects designed to help low-income individuals access to employment and related activities where existing transit is unavailable, inappropriate, or insufficient. The JARC program also funds reverse commute transit services available to the general public.

New Freedom Section 5317

The New Freedom formula grant program aims to provide additional tools to overcome existing barriers facing Americans with disabilities seeking integration into the work force and full participation in society. Lack of adequate transportation is a primary barrier to work for individuals with disabilities. The 2000 Census showed that only 60 percent of people between the ages of 16 and 64 with disabilities are employed. The New Freedom formula grant program seeks to reduce barriers to transportation services and expand the transportation mobility options available to people with disabilities beyond the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990.

AVAILABLE FUNDING:

Nonurbanized areas: \$748,286 for operating and capital projects

Small Urban areas: \$557,493 for operating and capital projects

ELIGIBLE COST/ACTIVITIES:

Eligible activities for the New Freedom grants include, but are not limited to:

- Purchasing vehicles and supporting accessible taxi, ride-sharing, and vanpooling program; including staff training, administration, and maintenance.

- Providing para-transit services beyond minimum requirements (3/4 mile to either side of a fixed route), including routes that run seasonally.

- Making accessibility improvements to transit and intermodal stations not designated as key stations.

- Supporting the administration of voucher programs for transportation services offered by human service providers.

- Supporting mobility management and coordination efforts among public transportation providers and other human service agencies that provide transportation. These activities are considered capital costs and are defined as short-range planning and management projects for improving coordination among public transportation and other transportation service providers.

COST SHARING REQUIREMENTS

New Freedom funds may be used to finance capital and operating expenses. The Federal share of eligible *capital* costs may not exceed **80 percent (80%)** of the net cost of the activity. Subject to the availability of funds, NCDOT shall provide one half (10%) of the required 20 percent (20%) nonfederal match for capital costs. The Federal share of the eligible *operating* costs may not exceed **50 percent (50%)** of the net operating costs of the activity.

As with all FTA formula program grants administered by NCDOT, all of the local match must be provided from sources other than federal DOT funds. Some examples of possible local match sources include local or State appropriations; other non-DOT federal funds; private donations; revenue from human services contracts and net income generated from advertising. Income from contracts to provide human service transportation may be used either to reduce the net project cost (treated as revenue) or to provide local match from New Freedom operating assistance.

Examples of types of programs that are potential sources of local match include: employment training, aging, community services, vocational rehabilitation services, and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). To be eligible for local

match for New Freedom funds, these funds must be used for activities included in the total net project costs.

Any eligible applicant might apply for these funds.

Needs Assessment

A transportation survey was conducted between February 10, 2009 and March 6, 2009. The survey was posted online at Survey Monkey and hard copies were completed and collected at the workshop for those who did not do it online. Hard copies were later entered into Survey Monkey by the Eastern Carolina Council of Government staff. The link to the survey was provided with the public notice that was email to pertinent groups within the county. A blanket notice went out via email from the Eastern Carolina Council of Government on their grant writer's listserv. Many nonprofit and governmental agencies in the region receive message via this listserv. The notice and Survey Monkey link was sent to 350 on this listserv. Additionally the Eastern Carolina Council of Governments has a Weekly Bulletin. The meeting notice and Survey Monkey link was sent to over 250 on this listserv. The full Survey Monkey report is included in the attachment section. The survey was completed by those attending the workshop on February 24, 2009. A total of 45 responded to the survey for Greene County. Here are the highlights of those responses (see attachment section for the full report):

- 71.1% of those responding believe that there is not enough public transportation service available.
- 88.6% assigned a high or medium importance to the need for extended hours of service

- 73.3% assigned a high or medium importance to the need for weekend and night service
- 83.4% assigned a high or medium importance for the need for extended service related to employment type trips
- 86.3% believed there is a need to increase service to fill the gaps in undeserved areas
- 95.6% assigned a high or medium importance to the need to increase service to fill the gaps in undeserved areas
- 88.9% assigned a high or medium importance to coordinate between transportation providers to provide cross county trips
- 54.8% assigned a high or medium importance to the need for public transportation service to focus specifically on providing employment trips
- 56.8% assigned a no or low importance to the need for a public transportation service to focus specifically on providing shopping and recreation trips.
- 58.1% felt that there was too much advance planning needed in order to get transportation (high and medium importance).
- 86.7% assigned a high or medium importance to the need to increase/improve door-to-door service for the elderly and disabled.
- 90.9% assigned a high importance to the need for education on available services, programs and eligibility requirements.
- 63.6% assigned a high or medium importance to the issue of communication issues (language barriers, non-existent web site or difficult to find/use, inconsistent information provided)
- 86.7% assigned a high importance to the need for advertising of the service.
- 62.8% assigned a high or medium importance to the need to increase participation on the Transportation Advisory Board.
- 88.9% assigned a high or medium importance to the need for sustained support for coordinated transportation planning among elected officials,

agency administrators, transportation providers, and other community leaders.

- 65.9% assigned a high or medium importance to the need for service providers to become more consumer-friendly.
- 79.1% assigned a high or medium importance to the need for users to have the option to make reservations for service after business hours.
- 81.4% assigned a high or medium importance to the fact that the agency staffing is too small to handle the number and complexity of issues that arise.

A workshop was held on Tuesday February 24, 2009 at the Greene County Senior Center at 2:00 PM. The meeting was held in conjunction with a scheduled Greene County Transportation Advisory Board meeting. The public meeting was conducted first and the TAB meeting followed. The meeting was facilitated by a representative of the Eastern Carolina Council of Government's East Carolina Rural Transportation Planning Organization (ECRPO). The facilitator worked directly with the group and wrote their ideas on a flip chart for all to see.

Identification of users of the transit system

The group began by identifying the current users of transit services in Greene County, not just who uses GCT services. These included:

- Medicaid clients
- Senior citizens
- Job seekers
- Vocational Rehabilitation clients
- Low income individuals
- Students (K-12)

Potential users of transit system

Additional potential users of a transit system would include:

- Workers
- Community College Students (curriculum and continuing education)
- College students (live in Greene County—attend ECU)
- Others without private vehicles or other means of transportation

Reasons for using transit system

Reasons for needing transportation include:

- Health appointments (medical, dental, physical therapy, other therapy)
- To/From work
- Congregate meals
- Shopping (food, health/beauty, general merchandise)
- Errands & personal care
- Professional services
- Social (church, events, cultural, gathering)
- School (K-12, community college, college/university, continuing education, enrichment)
- Visiting (hospital, nursing homes, assisted living facilities, etc.)
- Volunteering
- Recreation, mental stimulation and physical activity

Gaps in present services

Gaps or issues with current system include:

- No nights, weekend or holiday services
- On any given day there is inadequate funding to fill seats vis-à-vis those needing transportation service (non agency sponsored riders)

- The range of the existing system is limited (county, Greenville, Kinston and Farmville)
- Some veterans needing transport can't get where they need to go due to limitations in funding sources to purchase services from GCT
- Greene County Transportation System does not coordinate or share rides with systems in surrounding counties
- Those agencies with vehicles for transportation as a rule do not share or coordinate rides with other agencies
- Lack of user-friendly sidewalks, walking trails, proper bike lanes, and/or multi-purpose lanes throughout the county
- Existing transit vehicles cannot transport a bike

Societal Changes potentially impacting transit services in the future

These changes include (but are not limited to):

- Increase in number of veterans due to world conflicts
- Increase in population
- Increase in number of elderly (65 and older—Baby Boomers retiring)
- Increase in number of disabled (older population, disabled veterans, cumulative effects of obesity)
- Increase in poverty due to economic conditions (layoffs, loss of nest eggs, loss of retirement benefits)
- Requirements for environmentally friendly transportation options
- Concern about the greenhouse effect and global warming
- Air quality requirements affecting vehicles
- Operational costs continue to rise as ability of passengers to pay continues to decline due to the economy
- Funding streams that continue to decline and that require increased sustainability proof

Strategies to address the concerns and gaps

A number of strategies were discussed to address the concerns and gaps in transportation services in Greene County now and in the future. These include:

- A. Regionalization—combining multiple delivery systems within and outside the county could create a larger passenger base and more funding to create a truly comprehensive transportation system.
- B. Fixed routes—identifying key routes within the county and collection points that make sense vis-à-vis where people live that might use this service. Ridership would be slow to start and more subsidies would be needed to sustain the fixed route system during this period, but eventually if riders began to trust that the system was reliable and that it would be continued, the system has the potential to be self-sustaining.
- C. Demand/Response system—continuing with the present system, but expand the parameters so that more citizens would use it. At present certain groups of riders are given preference and seat are only available to others on a very limited basis due to limited funding. More vans might be needed to accommodate the increased ridership when funds are identified to subsidize or pay for the passengers not sponsored by a human service agency.
- D. Combination of Fixed Route and Demand/Response—combining features of the two systems, this new system would have small vehicles picking up outlying passengers and bringing them to a collection point where the fixed route vehicle would take them to their destination. Passengers with special needs would still be transported via demand/response vehicles.

The workshop participants strongly favor and recommend adoption of the combination strategy: combining features of the Fixed Route system and the Demand/ Response system.

Prioritization of Needs

The workshop participants discussed existing services and desired services. They are detailed in the prior section. The participants strongly favored and recommended adoption of the combination strategy: combining features of the Fixed Route system and the Demand/ Response system. They desire that the Greene County TAB work toward a system that incorporates this strategy.

Participants also discussed funding issues. A concern is that funding streams come and go and sustainability is an issue after the grant has ended. In a county like Greene with few resources and a low ability to pay score, one possible answer might be a tax of some sort designated for public transportation. The Greene County Commissioners would need to be committed to this effort and it would take a lot of public education (put a face on the problem—don't just offer facts) to achieve this objective. Legislation might also be required to permit Greene County to even consider this action.

Local options funding for public transportation introduced in NC General Assembly

On February 11 bills were introduced titled the Congestion Relief/ Intermodal Transport Fund. The legislation would allow counties to authorize, by resolution, a referendum to be placed on the ballot asking voters to authorize a ½¢ or ¼¢ sales tax. The proceeds from the tax would exclusively benefit public transportation in the county. In addition, counties could, by resolution, levy a \$7.00 per registered vehicle registration tax with the proceeds exclusively benefiting public transportation. Should a county choose not to impose the \$7.00 registration tax, cities within the county could impose the tax within their jurisdictional boundaries. Even if you do not have plans to utilize this legislation, it will offer you the tools necessary should you desire to use this option in the future.

Below is a link to the bills:

<http://www.ncleg.net/gascripts/BillLookUp/BillLookUp.pl?Session=2009&BillID=s151>

Long Range Transportation Plans

The goals set for the Transportation 2030 Plan LRTP includes considerations toward low-income, elderly and disabled as shown below:

- Increase Safety for all modes of transportation
- Ensure that the transportation plan benefits, and is equitable towards, elderly, disabled, low-income populations
- Preserve or improve environmental and community conditions
- Implement policies that improve system quality and capacity
- Improve public involvement
- Develop a regional travel demand model for current and future planning
- Develop strategies to improve rural connections
- Create a coordinated transportation improvement program and set of priorities that is fiscally constrained
- Address the lack of user-friendly sidewalks, walking trails, proper bike lanes, and/or multi-purpose lanes throughout the county.

Primary Policy Objectives

The Long Range Planning Process is an opportunity to assess the best available transportation data for the county and region, and to identify policy direction for local transportation decision-making. The plan itself will not be able to reverse the course of longstanding political, societal and behavioral forces that shape the transportation system and the rural environment. This plan does, however, attempt to guide shifts in policy direction that will result in a more sustainable

and effective transportation system for the long-term. The major policy issues and recommendations for 2009-2030 are detailed below.

Address Funding Gaps for Public Transportation

Travel demand modeling analysis shows that highways and arterial streets will become increasingly congested over the next 25 years. The modeling analysis also shows that investments in public transportation can have an impact on reducing congestion in certain parts of the region. The potential for increases in the use of public transportation and carpooling, in comparison with levels of today, are encouraging.

Based on the scale of analysis, the benefits of public transportation use seem small in comparison with overall levels of vehicle travel. While the model is not able to project that public transportation investments will achieve significant region-wide reductions in vehicle miles traveled at this time, the analysis presents a number of opportunities for significant benefits along corridors in the more urbanized areas. These corridors and sub-areas should be studied and considered for increased levels of investment in public transportation service.

In order for transit to be a competitive choice as a mode of travel, investments in public transportation service should be increased. Currently, public transportation providers are facing potential **shortfalls in operating funds**.

Federal and State formulas that allocate transportation funds play a major role in determining the level of public transportation service that local governments are able to offer. The long-term fiscal future for public transportation contains many unknowns. In addition, the dynamics of service areas and local needs are always changing. And so, by its nature, planning for public transportation often focuses on short- and mid-range objectives for improvements. This creates a difficulty in

meeting the requirements of the long-range planning process to analyze highway planning and transit planning on equal footing.

Observations

- Mobility Management will increase potential for riders.
- Park-&-ride impact is significant; create feeder systems.
- Collection of survey data has proven:
 - Why do/don't people ride?
 - Challenges to seniors and persons with disabilities
- Connecting services and extended services are crucial

Operational and Planning Objectives

- Expand service frequency
- Extend service hours
- Institute both formal and informal Park & Ride locations
- Institute more flexible service delivery
- Expand express and out of county services to the most promising markets
- Expand local and neighborhood routes in areas with sufficient density
- Study specific corridors for traffic operations improvements
- Expand fleet as well as camera devices on all units
- Connect to other transit services
- Consider how school system buses might be more fully utilized

Policy Objectives

- Increase funding from state and federal sources
- Address deficiency in transit operating funds
- Provide services to the greatest possible number of households within the service area, with emphasis on providing service to those not possessing

- automobiles, blind and other partially impaired people, the elderly, and others who are transit dependent.
- Use transit service provision to reinforce growth policies and support smart growth development
 - Expand access to outlying recreational facilities in the area
 - Involve other local transportation resources in expanding access to transportation services
 - Expand marketing program

Comprehensive Transportation Plan

The Comprehensive Transportation Plan (CTP) identifies new services and routes as well as identifies shortage of funding and coordination of services.

In addition to the specific projects identified below, all existing transit routes are considered as “needing improvement.” Such improvements include expansion of service hours, increased service frequency and improved coverage area. In many cases this may involve route realignment or similar changes which are beyond the scope of the CTP.

Safety and Security...home and community environments are safe and support self-sufficiency for older adults and caregivers.

- Health and Wellness...the health care system maximizes wellness and health potential and meets the diverse and unique needs of older adults.
- Financial Well-being ...resources, services and opportunities support and enhance the financial well-being of older adults and caregivers.
- Social Engagement...life enrichment opportunities engage older adults with people, places and programs.
- Living Environments...the living environments (built and natural) support and enhance the functioning of older adults.

- Service and Support Coordination...a collaborative network of formal and informal services and supports is coordinated to meet the needs of older adults and caregivers.

Goals and recommendations in the Aging Plan include transportation needs and priorities for older adults in Greene County. Greene County has requested those needs to be included in the plan in order to identify and increase awareness about older adult transportation needs, as well as leverage funding for transportation providers, agencies, and other entities to begin addressing these needs in the future.

Attachments

- a. Map of Greene County
- b. List of Attendees
- c. Survey (Blank)
- d. Analysis of Survey Responses (Survey Monkey Report)
- e. Comments from Survey