

## **ACCT Report to the Legislature**

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### **Executive Summary**

To be added in October

### **Biennial Work Meeting**

At their second biennial work meeting, the Agency Council on Coordinated Transportation (ACCT) honed in on specific project and legislative priorities for the 2005-07 biennium. The essential elements of the ACCT strategic plan remain unchanged, while the specific work agenda gained more focus.

#### **Strategic Plan Remains Unchanged**

The ultimate ACCT vision is to:

*Remove transportation as a barrier to full participation in the community.*

With an eye towards efficiency, effectiveness, coordination, accountability and information, ACCT will continue to provide programs and strategies to remove barriers, focus on results, and increase advocacy for coordinated special needs transportation.

#### **Work Agenda**

As the Council decided at the biennial work meeting, ACCT focuses on:

- Measuring the impact of transportation grants and technical assistance.
- Evaluating projects at each stage to assess continued ACCT support.
- Finding opportunities in Department of Transportation (WSDOT) to support ACCT principles, including better coordination of Job Access grants, Commute Trip Reduction and vanpool programs.
- Finding opportunities in Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) to support ACCT principles, including better coordination of transportation spending, Job Access grants, Medicaid, and cost per trip data.

- Identifying federal and state barriers that restrict coordination at the local level, such as multiple requirements for audit data from various funders.
- Holding more interactive ACCT meetings, with topic specific round table discussions.

**ACCT prioritizes funding for projects that:**

- Help communities utilize Medicaid brokers to meet other transportation needs.
- Integrate schools as a community transportation resource.
- Support connected trips (e.g. transportation to/from home, daycare, worksite, errands).
- Creatively use shared ride strategies, such as carpooling and vanpooling.

**ACCT works with local coalitions to:**

- Formalize coalition planning and project development roles.
- Integrate new federal requirements with existing coalition work.
- Build relationships with regional and metropolitan planning organizations.

**ACCT raises visibility of the issues by:**

- Developing a compelling key message and story.
- Working with legislative members of ACCT to tell the story.
- Engaging more special needs advocates.
- Aligning with the Governor's *Smart Buy* Initiative.

**ACCT pursues projects to:**

- Increase information about mobility options and coordination efforts, including:
  - Implementing Bi-State Trip Planner
  - Producing the 2005-07 ACCT Report to the Legislature
- Measure the performance of coordinated transportation, including:
  - Expanding WSDOT's transit statistical summary to include community transportation data.
  - Preparing for the Governor's Government Management and Accountability Program.
  - Conducting a cost/benefit analysis of homeless student transportation.
  - Identifying statewide transportation needs, and the cost of NOT addressing those needs.

## Performance Measures

ACCT's enabling legislation directs the Council to "develop guidelines for setting performance measures and evaluating performance." In March 2004, ACCT held a summit to identify indicators of a successful coordinated public transportation system and performance measures for providers, purchasers, and riders. State agency managers, transportation providers, and policy makers attended the summit. They selected cost-per-trip as the measure that most closely reflects the goals and mission of ACCT.

In order to demonstrate the value of coordinated transportation, ACCT measured the performance of 33 community transportation providers that received grant funding in 2005 from the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT). Community transportation providers are private, nonprofit, or governmental agencies that provide transportation services through contracts with or grants from other agencies or persons. ACCT also included the eight agencies that broker transportation for Washington's Medicaid clients.

WSDOT already measures the performance of its 28 transit systems which it publishes in the annual *Washington State Summary of Public Transportation*. ACCT's attention on the work of community transportation providers and Medicaid brokers paints a more complete picture of public transportation in the state for the evaluation of coordinated transportation efforts.

In addition to cost-per-trip, ACCT evaluated other aspects of coordinated transportation as represented by the data obtained from the community transportation providers and Medicaid brokers. This section of the report will summarize data on ridership, levels of service, funding, expenditures, accessibility, volunteer resources, partnerships, and planning efforts. Additionally, a state map will depict their service areas.

Actual Data Still being collected and analyzed.

## Stakeholder Feedback

To be Added in October From Consultant Report

## **Travel Options**

As you read this the visual results of our work in the past biennium should be available to you on line. The Travel Options project has been rooted in the fundamental value of providing customer information based on needs rather than jurisdiction. We have had the opportunity to not only streamline access to the broad selection of transportation available to the public but have been able to take significant steps towards providing travel information when and where it is needed.

We now have an Internet search tool for finding schedule, route, and connection information on public transportation providers. The core of the system is a geographic information system-based search tool for rail, intercity bus, transit, and demand responsive passenger services including taxis and shuttles. The Statewide Trip Planner gathers and provides information on public transportation services from Washington and will provide Oregon information as it becomes available.

The second achievement of this program was creating a working relationship with Google to display itineraries through their local mapping and service information site. This project takes information that we need for our statewide project and provides added visibility and access to the services we have statewide. Washington is a leader in public transportation and this project is the first demonstration of a public private relationship for public transportation information. It is value added for existing investments in state and local service information. Check out our information at [www.google.com/transit](http://www.google.com/transit).

### **Travel Options Funding**

The ongoing maintenance and development costs for this system are significant. WSDOT has shared the cost of the hardware through the various parts of the organization benefiting from the investment in servers and software we have purchased to implement this project. This coordination has reduced the ongoing costs for the Travel Options project. Further the system database will support the new federal reporting requirements and our existing legislative reporting requirements bringing in state additional fund sources to support on going maintenance and development.

## **Local Coordination Projects**

### **CTAA Technical Assistance**

ACCT and Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA) saw the need for assistance in communities through out Washington State and put together a technical assistance grant program. This program

allowed communities to develop projects, facilitate coordination, and conduct operational assessments and other such projects. CTAA and ACCT assisted a breadth of communities throughout the state with a wide variety of needs.

CTAA supported the Pierce County Coordinated Transportation and local school districts in the planning and implementation of the McKinney-Vento transportation demonstration project and other coordination projects with Puget Sound Educational School District. Yakima, Grant, Snohomish and Adams Counties all received assistance in the development of local coordinated coalitions. These Coalitions worked on coordinated transportation plans and education of the public. Mason Transit was assisted in the development of a ten year transit plan and Yakima County received a needs assessment when Greyhound abandoned routes in the community.

A more comprehensive description of some of the larger projects ACCT and CTAA facilitated through the technical assistance follow. CTAA assisted Asotin County's development of a PTBA, Greyhound replacement in Walla Walla and Yakima and Community Urban Bus Service (CUBS) Operational Assessment.

**CTAA assisted Asotin County in creating a new transit system**

Asotin County asked for technical assistance from the CTAA/ACCT Technical Assistance Program. A written transportation plan was requested because Asotin had chosen to go to the voters to fund a Public Transportation Benefit Area (PTBA). All PTBA's are required to have comprehensive plan approved by the Department of Transportation.

The plan was designed make use of existing transportation resources within Asotin County but also added additional service hours, and increases the scope of transportation; benefiting the people of Asotin County. The plan calls for Asotin Transit to create a Single Point of Contact for the transportation services offered to Asotin County residents.

In addition to writing their comprehensive plan, CTAA also created an informational brochure for the ballot measure and created a citizens advisory group for the transit system. Asotin County passed the ballot measure in 2005.

**CTAA planned for the replacement of intercity service in Walla Walla after Greyhound abandoned the Community**

The Blue Mountain Coordinated Transportation Coalition needed to find an intercity bus service provider to replace Greyhound who discontinued serving the Walla Walla Valley.

Two private, for-profit businesses expressing serious interest about expanding operations to include scheduled service between Walla Walla and Pasco but they didn't know if it would work financially.

These bus service providers and many of the members of the Blue Mountain Coordinated Transportation Coalition were concerned it would not be economically viable for any company to serve the Walla Walla to Pasco route on a long-term basis. There was discussion about what level of service would be best for the historical group of intercity bus passengers and speculation about market potential if this area had a convenient schedule.

The Blue Mountain Coordinated Transportation Coalition decided to pursue help in taking a good look at the community transportation needs. They looked to the CTAA/ACCT Technical Assistance Program for help. Through this process a consultant was hired to complete a needs assessment and plans for service alternatives to meet the needs of the community. This consultant also facilitated the selection by the community of the most appropriate transportation alternative. As a result they were able to institute stop gap service.

#### Operational Assessment for Community Urban Bus Service (CUBS)

CUBS has been impacted in recent years by the reduction in funds available to transits, the growing cost of providing Paratransit/ADA services and a shrinking of reserve funding. They looked to CTAA to help provide an operational assessment of the CUBS operation. CTAA hired a consultant to do a complete service assessment and a peer review and provide feed back on how CUBS could perform at the best possible level of service in the most economical way.

The consultant was able to examine community conditions, evaluate the transit system, lead a peer review and make service recommendations to improve the system. The overall operational assessment found the CUBS transit system performing in a similar manner to their peers and suggested specific improvements to make the system exceptional.

## Coordination with Medicaid Brokers

### Common Ground

To be added in October

### Beyond the Borders

Beyond the Borders is a project that was initiated in Southeast Pierce County to fill a significant service gap and to test a coordinated transportation brokerage system in the rural parts of the county. Starting in 2004, it utilizes the existing Medicaid broker – Paratransit Services, Inc. - to coordinate and schedule trips for residents in rural Southeast Pierce County.

The primary focus of the service is on people with special transportation needs accessing critical services, employment-related services, and youth activities. Other community members are allowed to ride if coordinated with an existing trip.

The project receives federal and state Job Access Reverse Commute funding as well as match funding from the Washington State Department of Transportation special needs grants.

### Why South Pierce County?

In 2002, the PCCTC conducted a needs assessment and identified significant transportation needs for people living in South Pierce County.

The 43,363 people living in this southeast area of the county have limited to no



mobility options. Pierce Transit does not serve this area because it is outside their taxing jurisdiction and service boundaries.

Over half of these residents could qualify as individuals with special transportation needs –unable to transport themselves due to their age, income status, or disability.

Although South Pierce County is a more affordable area to live, it is transportation poor. In addition, the area has limited services. For example, Eatonville has only one practicing physician and a small grocery store. This requires residents to go outside of their immediate area to access services.

### **How the Service Works**

Pierce County Community Services reviews rider applications and determines their eligibility before giving the ride request to the broker. The names of the eligible riders are then forwarded to Paratransit Services, a contracted transportation broker who also broker trips for the Medicaid program.

The broker distributes the trips to the most appropriate and lowest cost transportation providers, and groups the trips where possible. Providers then prepare the trip manifest and provide the actual trips. Where appropriate, providers connect riders to Pierce Transit fixed-route transfer stations.

### **Who is using the Service?**

Between July 2004 and December 2005, the service has provided trips to about 140 people, with approximately 6,500 passenger boardings. Boardings have increased about an average of 35 percent per quarter. Thirty-five percent of the passengers are frequent riders.

All of the riders are in a low-income bracket, with 75 percent of the rider in a very low income bracket. The average income for riders is \$11,200 per year. The age of the riders range the spectrum with 72 percent of the riders ages 18-62, 17 percent under age 18, and 18 percent of the riders over age 62. Nearly half of the riders report a disability.

### **Project Challenges**

While a growing and popular service, Beyond the Borders has encountered several challenges. Since the population is less dense, this is an expensive area to serve. Project coordinators have been working to group more trips, and have successfully reduced the cost per trip by xx%, but still is operating at a fairly high \$46 per trip.

Another challenge has been finding provider that are willing to provide the trips. Given the current arrangement, providers lose money, or lose potential fares, when they take these trips. Project coordinators have tried to overcome this challenge by designating a vehicle in that area for a fair compensation.

### **Transportation Saves Jobs**

The Beyond the Borders service has been particularly helpful to residents with disabilities to gain or maintain employment.

An employed resident of Roy always rode the bus from the Roy Y to Tacoma to work for fifteen years. When he was younger, he drove to the park n ride but was unable to continue to drive because of a visual impairment. His parents drove him to the bus stop for eighteen months but are no longer able to drive, due to health problems. The participant had actually submitted his letter of resignation when he learned about the Beyond the Borders transportation service. He started using the services and was able to keep his job. The transportation project has not only helped him to keep his job, but his independence and self esteem as well.

Services for the Blind has been referring several riders to our project. One blind person was hitch hiking to school and looking for work because he had no other transportation until this service started. He rode the service to look for work and just started a new job at Fort Lewis. He is happy to have obtained a job and credits the Beyond the Borders transportation service with helping him get it.

#### **A Personal Tribute to Beyond the Borders**

*“I live in Eatonville, Washington where there is no bus transportation with Pierce Transit. I am not able to drive or ride the bus due to my disability...and am depending upon this program to transport me.*

*The subject program has greatly helped me to find employment going mainly to the WorkSource office in Tacoma. I have also gone to staffing agencies to register for employment and will be attending a class for a month to enhance my computer skills. When I do obtain employment, I will be depending upon this program to transport me.”*

## Homeless Student Transportation

The Puget Sound Educational Service District (PSESD) implemented a McKinney-Vento Student Transportation Demonstration project throughout the 2005-2006 school year.

The federal McKinney-Vento legislation mandates that school districts must provide transportation to the school of origin for students who are identified as homeless. Regardless of where the student is residing, the school district has a responsibility to get the student to school and back. The legislative intent is that students will be more academically successful if they stay in their school of origin even if their home life is unstable. In 2005, the federal government appropriated one million dollars to the Washington State Department of Transportation to competitively distribute to school districts for the purpose of identifying creative ways to provide and coordinate the McKinney-Vento trips. ACCT members made up the review committee and distributed the funds. There is more information about the rest of the projects later in the report. The PSESD received a grant for \$350,000 to conduct a demonstration project.

The intent of the project was to demonstrate if cost efficiencies, capacity and service quality could be increased for school districts by utilizing existing non-profit and for profit service providers brokered through the current transportation infrastructure developed by the State Medical Assistance Administration for Medicaid transportation. The participating school districts used the transportation brokers to arrange transportation for out-of-district trips provided to students eligible under the McKinney-Vento Act. School districts were not able to provide these trips internally or in coordination with the school district in which the student was residing.

The demonstration project was collaboration between the King and Pierce County Transportation Brokers, HopeLink and Paratransit Services, and six school districts: Auburn, Federal Way, Kent, Sumner, Bethel and Tacoma.

By utilizing the brokerage system, the intent of the project was to gain economies of scale by coordinating as many McKinney-Vento trips as possible with other trips traveling in the same direction, where appropriate. However this never occurred due to a small number of school

districts participating, and school district restrictions on placing youth on the same vehicle as adults.

The results from the project were gathered from surveys, interviews, broker data, and a “Think Tank” meeting. The following conclusions were made regarding the transportation demonstration project.

- **Long Trips are Expensive:** Unless a school district can incorporate McKinney-Vento trips within their regular route, or issue bus passes or travel reimbursements, the cost of providing transportation is expensive. The average cost per student for in-district trips provided by school districts was approximately \$145; and the average cost per student for out-of-district trips arranged by brokers was \$625. Out of district trips are typically longer trips, with little to no ride sharing.
- **School District Administrative Costs Lowered:** Administrative costs per student for school districts participating in the demonstration project were 3.5 times less expensive than non-participating school districts. Broker administrative costs per student were 68 percent lower than participating school districts and nearly 6 times less expensive than non-participating school districts.
- **Cost Savings at Expense of Providers:** If school districts saved during the demonstration project, private providers lost. One provider estimated a total revenue loss of \$62,000 for the 2005-06 school year. At this rate, no provider in either county will be able or willing to provide the McKinney-Vento trips.
- **Capacity a Blessing and a Curse:** While the additional capacity was a blessing for school districts, transportation brokers worry about the strain on capacity during the peak hours. If more school districts utilize the brokerage system, more opportunities for cost sharing exist, however the capacity of the non-profit and for-profit transportation sector would need to increase. The capacity issue may be directly related to the cost reimbursement issue for providers. If providers are adequately compensated for the trip, more providers would respond to the demand for capacity.
- **Apples and Oranges:** There is nothing consistent about the way school districts track transportation service or administrative costs. Common definitions and tracking methods are needed in order to provide a more accurate evaluation of transportation costs between school districts; and between school districts and transportation brokers.
- **FBI Background Checks Critical, Yet Restricted:** While the project attempted to expand the driver pool with drug and alcohol testing and FBI background checks, target goals were not achieved. A considerable barrier to achieving the FBI background checks, is that no state law allows transportation brokers to require FBI background checks for publicly funded trips. Some of the

transportation agencies requested drivers to individually get FBI background checks and then self report. While falling short of ideal, this method revealed the need for required FBI background checks. The Medical Assistance Administration is investigating this issue further.

- **Medicaid Model is Good, But Has Limitations:** While the transportation brokerage model implemented by the state Medical Assistance Administration proved to be a valuable asset to school districts, the infrastructure needs to be more flexible to adapt to non-Medicaid trips. McKinney-Vento trips were reimbursed at Medicaid rates, with provider caps, and based on the individual. This resulted in losses to providers and missed opportunities to group trips, had school districts allowed it. This project illustrated the need for Medicaid brokers to incorporate systems that can change rates, rules, and policies based on different funders. If this would occur, Medicaid brokers could transition into general transportation brokers, offering a larger range of transportation options to a range of transportation funders.

## New Federal Coordination Requirements

In 2006, ACCT staff led a nationally recognized effort with transportation providers and planning organizations across the state to implement a new federal planning requirement for public transportation grant recipients.

The recently passed Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) requires the establishment of locally developed, coordinated public transportation plans for all human services transportation programs. Applicants for WSDOT's public transportation grant program are required to participate in the planning process with their local Regional Transportation Planning Organization (RTPO) or Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). Stakeholder groups that include the RTPOs/MPOs, public transportation providers, non-profit human services agencies, health providers, large employers, and consumers will develop and implement the plan.

Because of ACCT's coordination efforts over the past several years, Washington State was able to get a quick jump on the meeting the new planning requirements. Many areas in the state already had a coordinated transportation coalition in their community with most of the required stakeholders. Washington's efforts have been held out as an example to be followed by both the Federal Transit Administration and the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials. In the spring of 2006 ACCT was invited to present their planning process to the Community Transportation Association of America Expo.

A draft of the plans is due in the fall of 2006 in order for providers to apply for grants and will be incorporated into the RTPO/MPO comprehensive plans by July of 2007.

## Intercity Study

ACCT is in the process of revising the existing intercity plan to meet specific statewide network needs, which were seriously impacted when Greyhound pared back their level of services to 21 Washington communities in 2004. ACCT has contracted with an independent consulting firm to conduct a statewide intercity bus service study. The study produced two technical memoranda with the following findings:

**Technical Memorandum #1: Assessment of Need and Existing Services**—The document identifies at least ten municipalities that have been bypassed and have no intercity service within a 25 mile radius.

- Colville
- Connell
- Coulee Dam
- Davenport
- Kettle Falls
- Long Beach
- Newport
- North Bend
- Ocean Park
- Oroville

Those intercity services remaining in operation appear to be well targeted and are responsive to identified levels of need.

**Technical Memorandum #2: Outreach Results and Potential Network Additions**—Demographic analysis reveals the need to develop a Walla Walla–to--Ellensburg transportation corridor, with multiple market connectors. The Mid-Columbia region is also identified as requiring new service levels, connecting Portland to Klickitat and Yakima. Additionally, the northeast corner of the state requires new services from Kettle Falls and Colville to Spokane, with intercity hubs along the way.

The revised intercity plan will guide the development of intercity public transportation services, linking cities and towns throughout Washington, including connections between modes (i.e. bus, passenger rail, ferries, and air service) and from rural areas and small towns to the greater network of intercity services. Specific products of the plan include a priority list of projects for state funding, recommendations for policy changes, and strategies for improved connections between services. The revised plan is scheduled to be completed and available in December of 2006.

## **Next Steps: Contracting Directly with Transportation Providers for Intercity Services**

ACCT is currently drafting a Request For Proposals (RFP) which seeks to contract for direct transportation services, providing seamless coordinated transportation opportunities along the Walla Walla to Ellensburg corridor. This represents the first project in a new funding approach for WSDOT.

The RFP process will allow WSDOT to secure the provision of regional intercity bus services that would not otherwise be provided in the open marketplace and to do so in a coordinated fashion consistent with a greater statewide network of services. In contrast to past practices, this and future projects shall be a competitive process between individual operators for specific intercity bus services identified by WSDOT in consultation with local stakeholders.

## **Homeless Student Transportation**

To be added in November

## **Legislative Requests**

To be added in October