

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Federal Background

In August 2005, Congress passed the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient, Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), reauthorizing the Surface Transportation Act. Part of this reauthorization established new requirements for grantees under the Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC), New Freedom Initiative and Elderly and Disabled Transportation (5310) programs, starting in fiscal year 2007. These new requirements include the creation of coordination action plans for public transit and human services transportation at the state, regional, and local levels. The plans are meant to establish goals, criteria and strategies for delivering efficient, coordinated services to elderly, underemployed or otherwise financially disadvantaged persons and persons with disabilities.

The May 1, 2007, Federal Transportation Administration (FTA) guidance for each funding program includes a chapter on the coordinated planning process. This chapter, which is identical for each program, states that projects selected for funding from each program must be "...derived from a locally developed, coordinated public transit-human services transportation plan..." and that the plan be "...developed through a process that includes representatives of public, private, and non-profit transportation and human services providers and participation by members of the public." The required elements and their corresponding location in this document are listed below.

Required Elements of the Coordinated Plan and Corresponding Sections:

Section III – An assessment of available services that identifies current providers (public, private, and non-profit).

Section IV – An assessment of transportation needs for persons with disabilities, older adults, and people with low incomes.

Section V – Strategies and/or activities to address the identified gaps and achieve efficiencies in service delivery.

Section VI – Relative priorities for implementation based on resources, time, and feasibility for implementing specific strategies/activities identified.

B. Programs

Job Access and Reverse Commute (Section 5316)

The Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) program provides funding for local programs that support the development and maintenance of transportation services so that

welfare recipients and eligible low-income individuals can access jobs and job-related activities.

The main focus is to allow for new or innovative services that match the locations of low-income workers with locations of jobs or new job creation. Funds may be used for capital expenses with Federal funds providing up to 80 percent of the project cost. For operating expenses, Federal funds are provided for up to 50 percent of the net operating cost of the project and allows other non-DOT Federal funds to be used as matching funds, so long as the Federal share does not exceed 95% of the total project cost.

New Freedom Program (Section 5317)

The New Freedom Program is a newly created program under SAFETEA-LU. It encourages service and facility improvements that address transportation needs of persons with disabilities beyond those required by the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA). The program is to provide additional tools that will allow individuals with disabilities to overcome barriers and be able to fully participate in society. It provides a formula grant program for associated capital and operating costs.

While designed to be awarded to existing public transit agencies, the administrative requirements of Section 5310 apply to this program. Funds may be used for capital expenses with Federal funds providing up to 80 percent of the project cost. For operating expenses, Federal funds are provided for up to 50 percent of the net operating cost of the project.

Elderly Individuals and Individuals with Disabilities Program (5310)

The Section 5310 program is a formula-based funding program for capital vehicle expenses that provides annual funding to states for the purchase of vehicles and equipment to be used by non-profit organizations or government agencies in delivering transportation to the elderly and disabled. The Nebraska Department of Roads administers the program, which is generally used for the purchase of accessible life-equipped vehicles that are purchased for non-profit organizations. Additional requirements under SAFETEA-LU include the provision that projects funded under this program must be included in a locally developed human services coordinated transportation plan. The current program structure is a competitive solicitation with recipients receiving up to 80 percent federal funding, contingent on a 20 percent local match.

Relationship of the Plan to the Section 5310 Program

In Nebraska, the Elderly Individuals and Individuals with Disabilities Program (Section 5310) will continue to be administered by the Nebraska Department of Roads. To ensure compliance with SAFETEA-LU requirements, the *Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan* will serve as a basis for competitive project selection and funding for all Section 5310 projects within the Lincoln planning area. The evaluation will ensure that projects submitted for Section 5310 funding are consistent with this *Coordinated Plan*.

C. Eligible Project Uses

For these grant programs, funds may be used for capital expenses with Federal funds providing up to 80 percent of the cost of the project, or 50 percent of the operating expenses. These funds must be matched by other funding sources or in-kind. New Freedom projects must demonstrate that they are new and go beyond what is required by the ADA.

JARC projects include but are not limited to:

- Developing new or expanded transportation projects or services that provide access to employment opportunities.
- Promoting, through marketing efforts, public transportation by low-income workers, including the use of public transportation by workers with nontraditional work schedules.
- Supporting the administration and expenses related to voucher programs. This activity is intended to supplement existing transportation services by expanding the number of providers available or the number of passengers receiving transportation services. Vouchers can be used as an administrative mechanism for payment to providers of alternative transportation services. The JARC program can provide vouchers to low-income individuals to purchase rides, including (1) mileage reimbursement as part of a volunteer driver program, (2) a taxi trip, or (3) trips provided by a human services agency. Providers of transportation can then submit the voucher to the JARC Program administering agency for payment based on pre-determined rates or contractual arrangements. Transit passes for use on fixed route or ADA complementary paratransit service are not eligible. Vouchers are an operational expense which requires a 50/50 (Federal/local) match.
- Promoting the use of employer-provided transportation, including the transit pass benefit program under Section 132 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986.
- Subsidizing the costs associated with adding reverse commute bus, train, carpool, van routes, or service from urbanized areas and other than urbanized areas to suburban workplaces.
- Subsidizing the purchase or lease by a non-profit organization or public agency of a van or bus dedicated to shuttling employees from their residences to a suburban workplace.
- Facilitating public transportation services to suburban employment opportunities.

New Freedom projects include but are not limited to:

- Purchasing vehicles to support new accessible taxi, ride-sharing, and/or vanpooling programs.
- Providing paratransit services beyond minimum requirements (for example, 3/4 mile to either side of a fixed route), including for routes that run seasonally.
- Making accessibility improvements to transit and intermodal stations not designated as key stations.
- Supporting the administration and expenses related to voucher programs. This activity is intended to supplement existing transportation services by expanding the

number of providers available or the number of passengers receiving transportation services. Vouchers can be used as an administrative mechanism for payment to providers of alternative transportation services. The New Freedom program can provide vouchers to low-income individuals to purchase rides, including (1) mileage reimbursement as part of a volunteer driver program, (2) a taxi trip, or (3) trips provided by a human services agency. Providers of transportation can then submit the voucher to the New Freedom Program administering agency for payment based on pre-determined rates or contractual arrangements. Transit passes for use on fixed route or ADA complementary paratransit service are not eligible. Vouchers are an operational expense which requires a 50/50 (Federal/local) match.

- Supporting volunteer driver and aide programs.
- Supporting mobility management and coordination programs among public transportation providers and other human services agencies that provide transportation.

The Elderly Individuals and Individuals with Disabilities Program:

Capital projects are eligible for funding. Most funds are used to purchase vehicles, but acquisition of transportation services under contract, lease or other arrangements and state program administration are also eligible expenses.

D. Funding

Projects funded with the three sources of grant funds are to be selected through an annual competitive process and derived from this coordinated planning effort. The existing and expected funding apportionments by funding source are listed below.

Job Access and Reverse Commute Formula Program (Section 5316): The JARC Program existed under the previous transportation legislation but SAFETEA-LU has changed the funding from an earmark to a formula program based on the number of low-income individuals. Federal requirements are that JARC recipients be selected on a competitive basis.

FY 2006: \$ 93,940
FY 2007: \$ 99,023
FY 2008: \$106,000*
FY 2009: \$111,111*

*Subject to Federal funding appropriations.

New Freedom Program (Section 5317): This program is new under SAFETEA-LU and its purpose is to encourage services and facility improvements for addressing the transportation needs of people with disabilities, above and beyond what is required by the transportation section of the American with Disabilities Act. New Freedom funds may cover capital or operating costs, and grantees must be selected on a competitive basis.

FY 2006: \$ 45,353
FY 2007: \$ 51,472
FY 2008: \$ 55,000*

FY 2009: \$ 60,000

*Subject to Federal funding appropriations.

Elderly Individuals and Individuals with Disabilities (Section 5310): This program existed under the transportation legislation. The Section 5310 Program provides funds for capital costs associated with providing services to older adults and people with disabilities; generally, accessible vehicles are purchased for non-profit organizations.

FY 2006: Programmed

FY 2007: \$133,000

FY 2008: \$142,000*

FY 2009: \$148,000*

*Subject to Federal funding appropriations.

The Lincoln MPO has been designated by the Governor as responsible for administering JARC and New Freedom Program funds. The Elderly Individuals with Disabilities Program will continue to be administered by the Nebraska Department of Roads. The *Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan* will also serve as the basis for competitive project selection and funding of all of the projects. The MPO, as recipient for JARC and New Freedom program funds within the Lincoln Metropolitan Area, will apply to FTA for these funds on behalf of subrecipients.

The Lincoln MPO will publicly advertise the availability of funds and selection criteria. The agreed upon criteria is identified in Section VI. An initial "Call for Proposals" to solicit projects is expected to be issued by the MPO toward the end of 2007 with applications due in January of 2008. The MPO will transmit these applications to the State, accompanied with a ranked order of projects deemed most important in addressing the identified needs within the Lincoln Metropolitan Area. The project proposals will be reviewed and prioritized, submitted to the Lincoln MPO Officials Committee for approval, and forwarded to the Nebraska Department of Roads for final action.

E. Background of the Lincoln Metropolitan Planning Organization

The Lincoln Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) is a policy-making board comprised of representatives from local government and transportation authorities that review transportation issues and develop transportation plans and programs for the metropolitan area. This organization is a forum for cooperative decision making and provides for the involvement of principal elected officials of general purpose local government.

To assist them in their decision-making process, the MPO board members rely upon other committees and support staff, as well as active participation from interested citizens, concerned business representatives, special action groups, and other voices in the community.

As stated above, the Lincoln MPO is the designated recipient for these grant funds. Per federal requirements, the designated recipient is responsible for the following:

1. Conducting an area wide competitive selection process.
2. Certifying a fair and equitable distribution of funds resulting from the competitive selection process.
3. Certifying that each project selected was derived from a locally developed coordinated public transit-human services transportation plan.
4. Certifying that local plans are developed through a process that included representatives of public, private, and non-profit transportation and human services providers and participation by the public.
5. Managing all aspects of grant distribution and oversight for subrecipients receiving funds under this program.

The Lincoln MPO is the administrator of the above-mentioned federal funding programs in the Lincoln area. The Lincoln MPO was assisted by the City of Lincoln Urban Development Department in developing the coordinated plan. The Community Services Initiatives (CSI) Basic and Emergency Needs Coalition, a local human services planning organization, was charged with developing the coordinated plan.

F. Background of the Community Services Initiatives (CSI)

CSI is a human services planning and implementation process that works to coordinate the local human services delivery system. CSI began in January, 2005 and is facilitated by the Human Services Federation. It consists of four coalitions comprised of many human services agencies that work together to give the community direction in human services, manage on-going funding needs, and evaluate the impact of its efforts on the community.

CSI is a partnership between area human services providers, the Human Services Federation, Lincoln and Lancaster County, and United Way of Lincoln and Lancaster County. The University of Nebraska, through its Center for Children, Families and Law also participates in this effort. The four coalitions are 1) Children and Youth, 2) Behavioral Health, 3) Stop Abuse, and 4) Basic and Emergency Needs. Collectively, the four coalitions represent approximately 180 local human services agencies.

In August, 2006 CSI's Basic and Emergency Needs Coalition completed and adopted the *Strategic Plan for Meeting Basic and Emergency Needs and Moving People to Self-Sufficiency* (revised January, 2007). This plan is based on an analysis of human services needs and gaps in the community. It includes goals, strategies, and action steps to meet identified needs and reduce service gaps. Lack of transportation was repeatedly identified throughout the planning process as a barrier to meeting basic needs and reaching self-sufficiency. As a result, the following goal is included in the *Strategic Plan*: "Improve public transportation and community transportation services that meet the basic and emergency/self-sufficiency needs of transit dependent populations."

The MPO designated the Coalition as the lead entity to develop this plan as a result of the involvement of the group in developing the *Strategic Plan*, and its broad representation of human services providers. Appendix A includes a list of member agencies of the CSI Basic and Emergency Needs Coalition.

G. History of Coordination Efforts in Lincoln/Lancaster County

Beginning in 1989, a study was prepared that explored the potential for coordination of the current special transportation services for elderly and disabled persons in Lincoln and Lancaster County, Nebraska. The study/plan, entitled *Coordinated Elderly and Handicapped Transportation Services Study and Plan for Lincoln, Nebraska*, was prepared by Carter Goble Associates (CGA), Inc. by a contractual agreement funded by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), the City of Lincoln, and Lancaster County. The plan identified a total of 37 public and private human services transportation provider agencies in Lincoln and Lancaster County. After evaluating the potential and feasibility of coordinating those existing services, CGA found that a fully coordinated special transportation program could potentially increase the level of available services and/or reduce the overall service costs by 25 percent. The importance of coordinating transportation services was affirmed by decision-making officials in Lincoln and Lancaster County, and by further detailing of the study utilizing ten initial candidate agencies.

In 1999, the United Way of Lincoln and Lancaster County and the Joint Budget Committee (JBC) of the City of Lincoln and Lancaster County commissioned a comprehensive community needs assessment on human services provision for Lincoln/Lancaster County. One of the priority needs identified was the “Provision of efficient and accessible means of travel to employment, services and other activities via publicly-accessible transportation.” As a result of this need, a series of discussions took place in December, 2002 to further explore coordinated transportation services.

The outcome of the facilitated discussions was the agreement by League of Human Dignity and StarTran to take the lead in finding ways for coordinating transportation services. With the assistance of local charitable foundations, a pilot coordinated project was formed in 2004. The pilot program was staffed by a transportation coordinator and was to be implemented over a three year period. The overall goal of the pilot program was to implement a fully coordinated transportation program as identified in the 1989 Carter Goble Study.

The pilot program, named the Lincoln-Lancaster County Human Services Coordinated Transportation Project (CTP), was comprised of six transportation providers charged with achieving a coordinated transportation system. The goals and objectives of the CTP were to implement a coordinated program over a three year period. Funding was secured through local foundations, with the League of Human Dignity and StarTran providing in-kind services.

During the first year, problems began to develop with the feasibility of vehicle sharing. In addition, confidentiality issues created by ride-sharing became a serious roadblock due to Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Action (HIPAA) confidentiality requirements. However, the greatest issue was the insurance coverage of vehicles which would be driven by people who were not employees of the agency owning the vehicle, and also providing rides to people who were not clients of that agency.

In the end, the ideal of true inter-agency coordination had been blocked by a variety of local laws, turf issues, insurance problems, and the absence of a source of on-going stable

funding. Differing transportation needs and the variability of the schedules of the clients of several agencies also contributed to the lack of success. The project has since been reconfigured and is now pursuing providing extended evening, weekend, and holiday hours transportation to mobility limited elderly and people with disabilities.

H. Plan Goals

The goals for this plan are:

- Increase the understanding of human services transportation needs among stakeholders and elected officials in the community.
- Establish strategies for Federal funds that support coordination and meet the basic need for transportation.

I. Study Area

The effective area covered by this plan includes the City of Lincoln and Lancaster County. See the map on the following page.

J. Definitions

A list of definition of terms, used in this Plan, is included in Appendix B.

Exhibit 1

Area for the Coordinated Public Transit Human Services Transportation Plan, Lincoln and Lancaster County, Nebraska

