

NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION TRANSPORTATION PLANNING BOARD



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Assessment of JARC/New Freedom Programs in the National Capital Region

Tasks 1 and 2

Presented by Connie Soper, Nelson\Nygaard Consulting Associates
October 14, 2011

Purpose of Presentation

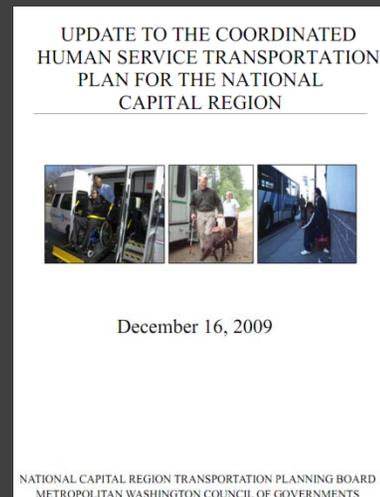
- Review assessment objectives, methodology and key findings
- Next Steps
- Comments from Task Force Members



OVERVIEW OF ASSESSMENT

Overview of JARC and New Freedom Programs

- Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) Program
 - Grants offer job access services for persons with low income
- New Freedom Program
 - Grants to improve mobility for persons with disabilities
- Program Details
 - Administered by FTA
 - Projects funded must be derived from Coordinated Plan
 - Eligible activities include:
 - Capital improvements
 - Operations
 - Mobility management
 - Match required
 - 50% operating
 - 20% capital or mobility management



Purpose of Assessment

- The Transportation Planning Board (TPB)
 - Administers JARC and New Freedom Programs for Washington DC Urbanized Area
 - Distributed more than \$10 million combined federal and other sources to fund:
 - 35 grants funded between 2007-2010
 - 20 separate sponsors
- This review intended to examine and assess:
 - Program administration and oversight
 - Effectiveness of projects in meeting mobility challenges for low-income and disabled persons
 - Identify best practices locally and elsewhere

Assessment Methodology

- Meetings and Interviews
 - Interviews with key project stakeholders, including most project sponsors
 - Attendance at pre-proposal conference
 - Facilitation of two focus groups with program participants
 - Meeting with Task Force members to discuss program challenges, benefits, observations, etc.
- Review and Analysis
 - Review of other relevant reports
 - Analysis of available data reporting on project goals and outcomes
 - Online survey of potential program sponsors who did not submit applications
- Peer Review

ADMINISTRATION OF JARC AND NEW FREEDOM (TPB'S ROLE)

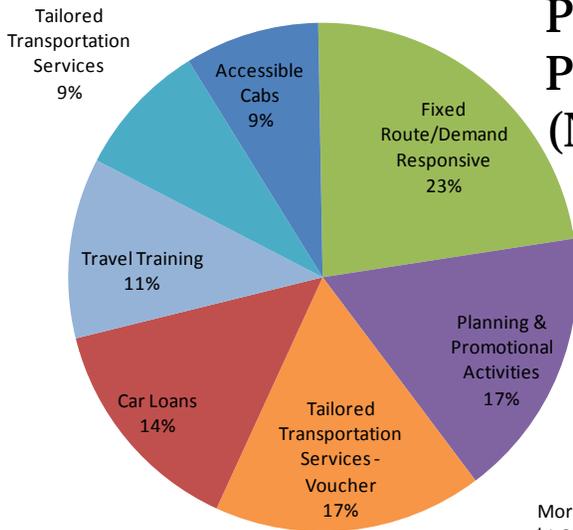
TPB Program Administration and Oversight

- With Task Force, prepares initial Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan (JARC and New Freedom projects must be derived from Plan)
- Serves as designated recipient for JARC and New Freedom funds
- Passes funds through to local project sponsors (with exception of WMATA)
- Task Force Chair facilitates project selection process
- Staff receives quarterly reports and monitors projects
- Serves as sponsor for:
 - Wheelchair Accessible Taxi Project
 - Regional Transportation Information Clearinghouse Project

OVERVIEW OF FUNDED GRANTS 2007- 2010

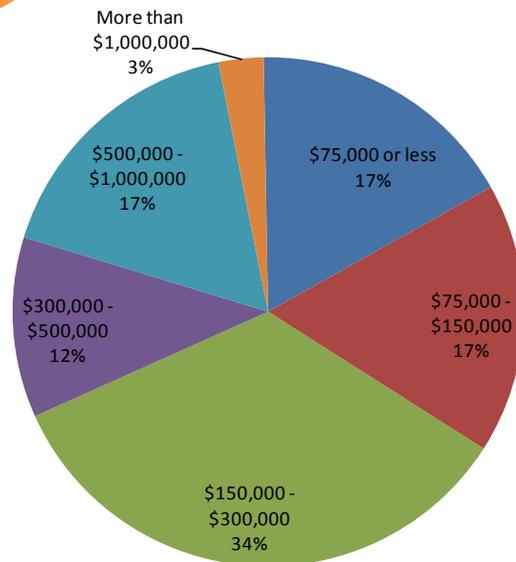
Characteristics of Grants Funded

Percentage of All Projects by Category (Number of Grants)



- Wide variety (7 categories) of grants funded
- 17% of the grants are completed. Another 25% are at least 50% completed (as determined by funding spent).
- 20% of the grants received over \$500,000 while most were smaller in scale.

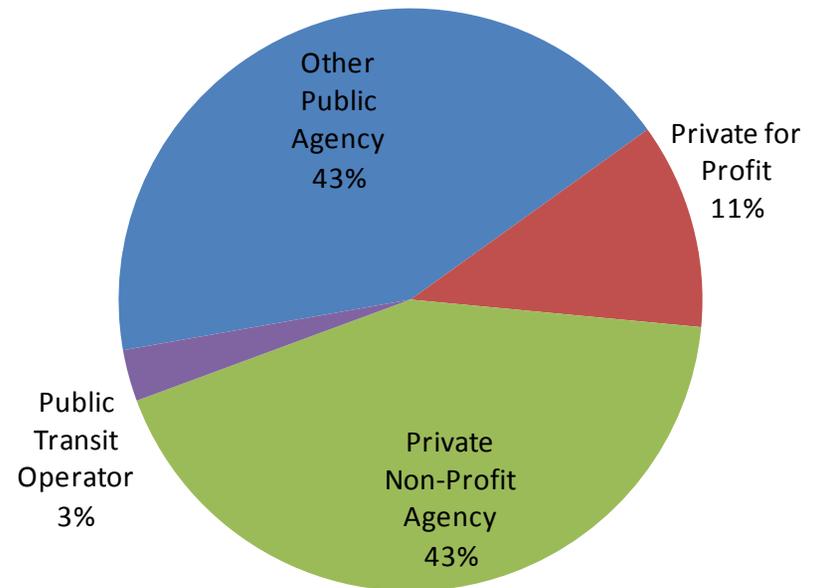
Grants by Funding Amount Category



Key Findings: Sponsors

- 35 grants
- 20 sponsors
- Eight sponsors received multiple grants
- 11 grants needed additional time beyond 2 years to spend federal grant
- 43% of sponsors are private non-profit agencies
- 43% are public agencies other than transit agencies
- Three of the public agencies are County or DC Department of Transportation agencies

Grant Sponsor by Type



Peer Systems

- Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC)
- Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization
- Regional Transportation Authority (RTA-Chicago)
- North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG-Dallas)
- Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC)
- Metropolitan Council (Minneapolis)
- Tri-County Metropolitan Transportation District of Oregon (TriMet-Portland)
- Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC-San Francisco Bay Area)
- Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT)

Key Findings: Program Administration and Oversight

- Compared to its peers, the TPB:
 - Takes a more proactive role in program administration.;
 - Is one of only a few to undertake an assessment of this scope;
 - Has been successful in obligating all of its JARC and New Freedom funds, unlike some of its peers;
 - Funds a wider range of projects, and also has a wider variety of project sponsors;
 - Is somewhat unusual in that it also serves as project sponsor (one other peer also does this)

Shared Challenges—Peer Programs

- FTA rules, regulations, and processes are difficult to understand
- Timelines can be cumbersome
- Identifying match is greatest challenge
- Small funding amounts make it difficult to attract a large pool of applicants

Other Findings

- Current reporting mechanisms don't capture qualitative benefits
- There are no consequences for those sponsors who are not meeting original objectives stated in the grant application
- About half of priority projects established by the Task Force have been funded, but 80% of resources are dedicated to these projects
- No widespread changes or revisions in TPB administrative and oversight process are called for

Key Findings: Grants funded (2007-2010)

- Services are pilot projects, untested, and not traditional
- Many are labor intensive and not meant to be “efficient”
- Need to consider both qualitative and quantitative measures
- Comparing one project to another = “apples to oranges”
- Grant data on costs and trips provided lacking or not consistently reported
- Projects are considered “pilot projects” or intended to test new service delivery mechanisms--learning curve is higher.

Observations on Grants Funded (2007-2010)

- Most grants' actual outcomes did not meet original expectations as stated in the application
- Most grants met challenges with implementation and 11 were not able to complete the project within the 2 year timeframe
- Sponsors consider projects are successful because they improve mobility for low-income persons and for persons with disabilities
- Out of those grants completed, none have found other funds to sustain them

Key Findings: Grants Funded (2007-2010)

- The level of effort and learning curve to administer and oversee projects diminishes over time
- Building evaluation into the project may help assess performance
- WMATA included an element intended to evaluate and document project outcomes. An independent research firm assesses the quantitative aspects of its travel training program

Key Findings: Grants Funded (2007-2010)

- The DC Accessible Taxi Pilot project requires on-going reporting on the number of wheelchair trips provided
- Advance planning can help refine project goals and objectives
 - Prince William County Area Agency on Aging, through a mobility management grant, conducted a comprehensive plan to evaluate mobility options for its clientele .
- No widespread changes in how grants are administered, but changes to reporting of grant outcomes will be explored

COMMENTS/NEXT STEPS

Questions for Task Force

- What do you think is the most significant finding that should inform the next step of developing recommendations?
- What is the most significant issue that you as a grantee has faced that may have created delays in implementing projects?
- Are there population groups or geographic areas that have not been served by the program to date?

Next Steps

- Receive comments from TPB and Task Force Members
- Develop and review program recommendations with Task Force in November
- Final Report presented to TPB in January



National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board

**ASSESSMENT OF
JARC/NEW FREEDOM PROGRAMS
IN THE NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION**

**Tasks 1 and 2
DRAFT FINAL REPORT**

October 2011

National Capital Region
Transportation
Planning Board





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