

Proposed Role of the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB) in Human Service Transportation Coordination

June 6, 2006

This document outlines a proposed role for the TPB in addressing human service transportation coordination requirements under the new federal surface transportation law -- Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU). Under this proposal, the TPB would draft and approve the locally-developed coordinated plan with participation from stakeholders, and would be the designated recipient for two Federal Transit Administration programs: Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) and New Freedom.

This proposal is the outcome of meetings of an ad-hoc group hosted by TPB staff on April 6, May 12 and June 1, 2006. This ad-hoc group included the District of Columbia, Maryland and Virginia Departments of Transportation, public and private transportation providers (including the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA), human service agencies, and representatives from low-income populations, persons with disabilities and older adults from around the region.

What is "Coordination"?

Coordination is a difficult term to define, and means different things to different people. Within the context of Human Service Transportation, the term refers to agencies working together to eliminate duplication of specialized transportation service for people with disabilities, older adults and low-income populations. Various state and federal funding streams have different administrative and eligibility requirements which complicate the coordination of public and human service transportation.

The recent Transit Cooperative Research Project (TCRP) Report 91¹ provided the following definition of coordination:

"Coordination is a technique for better resource management. It means working together with people from different agencies and backgrounds. It requires shared power: shared responsibility, management, and funding. Many transportation functions, including planning, purchasing, vehicle operations, maintenance, and marketing, can be coordinated..."

Coordinating transportation services offers substantial benefits to many communities, but significant investments of time and energy may be required before the desired results are achieved..."

¹ Executive Summary. *Economic Benefits of Human Service Transportation and Transit Services*. TCRP Report 91. Transportation Research Board, 2003.

Coordinating transportation functions is best understood as a political process, which, like many other political processes, may involve changing environments, conflicts regarding power and control over resources, and competing goals or personalities...

What does SAFETEA-LU provide?

SAFETEA-LU provides three Federal Transit Administration (FTA) human service related transportation programs:

1. Elderly Individuals and Individuals with Disabilities (Section 5310)
2. Job Access and Reverse Commute (Section 5316)
3. New Freedom (Section 5317)

Elderly Individuals and Individuals with Disabilities Program (Section 5310) is maintained, but it is now required to be coordinated with the Section 5316 and Section 5317 programs. SAFETEA-LU does not change the distribution channel for this program: direct distribution to the states.

Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC, Section 5316) has been changed from an earmarked program to formula-based distribution, with the metropolitan Washington region receiving significantly less funding than it received in recent years through earmarks.

New Freedom Program (Section 5317) is a new program for projects that go “above and beyond” the Americans with Disabilities Act’s (ADA’s) transportation requirements. Some examples of eligible projects include same-day paratransit service, door-through-door paratransit service and accessible taxicabs.

Funding levels, match requirements and current and proposed recipients are displayed in Table 1 below:

Table 1: SAFETEA-LU Funding Amounts and Recipients for Metropolitan Washington.

Program	Recipient	Federal FY 2006	Total Funding after Match
Elderly and Persons with Disabilities (5310)	State/District DOTs	Differs by state/district.	Only capital projects are eligible. 80/20 match
JARC (5316)	TPB*	\$1.2 million	\$2.4 operating or \$1.5 capital
New Freedom (5317)	TPB*	\$1.0 million	\$2.0 operating or \$1.25 capital

* Currently proposed designated recipient.

What is required by SAFETEA-LU?

SAFETEA-LU requires that the TPB, as a metropolitan planning organization, play a greater role in coordination of specialized transportation services. The TPB must consider the design and delivery of specialized transportation services provided by recipients of federal assistance for non-emergency transportation services.

More specifically, SAFETEA-LU contains the following requirements which must be met in order for the region to receive Federal funds for these three programs:

- The TPB must be involved in the development of a “locally developed coordinated plan” for the three programs. Funding for projects from all three programs must be derived from the coordinated plan as of Federal FY07.
- This plan must be developed through a process that includes representatives of public, private, and non-profit transportation services providers, as well as human service agencies and representatives from low-income populations, persons with disabilities and older adults.
- JARC (Section 5316) and New Freedom (Section 5317) projects must be selected on a competitive basis.
- The TPB must play an active role in the solicitation of project proposals.

Who would develop the Coordinated Plan?

It is proposed that the TPB would develop the coordinated plan with the assistance of a Human Service Transportation Coordination Task Force, which would include representatives from public transit providers, private and non-profit transportation providers, human service agencies, and representatives from low-income populations, persons with disabilities and older adults.

The TPB’s Access for All (AFA) Advisory Committee would be involved in the development of the coordinated plan and would have representatives serving on the Task Force. The coordinated plan would consider the TPB’s 1999 JARC Plan, as well as draw on previous work done by the AFA – including the “Improving Demand Responsive Services for People with Disabilities” report from February 2006. This report identified existing specialized transportation services, gaps and shortcomings in those services, and recommendations for transit improvements and coordination opportunities in the region. An AFA subcommittee has recently produced a report identifying gaps in transportation services for low-income populations and made recommendations for addressing the gaps. This report is scheduled for presentation to the TPB at its July 19, 2006 meeting.

FTA’s proposed guidance of March 15, 2006 suggests that a coordinated plan address the following five key elements:

1. Provide an overview of existing transportation services (public and private)
2. Identify gaps in transportation services for persons with disabilities, older adults and low-income populations
3. Identify strategies for addressing those gaps
4. Identify potential coordination opportunities
5. Prioritize implementation strategies

An initial plan would be developed between June 2006 and February 2007.

The initial plan would provide a framework for coordination in the region, and identify opportunities for coordination that will take further time and effort. Given the numerous and complex set of transportation providers and funding streams in the region, it is anticipated that the coordinated plan will evolve over time. After the first plan is developed, the TPB will work on additional coordination opportunities, and broaden participation in the coordination task force to

include other federal funding partners that provide non-emergency medical and other human service transportation.

Who would be the designated recipient and administer the competitive process for Job Access Reverse Commute (JARC) and New Freedom?

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) has indicated that at the present time there are no officially designated recipients under SAFETEA-LU for the Job Access Reverse Commute (Section 5316) and the New Freedom (Section 5317) programs. Until recipients are designated, funds for JARC and New Freedom for federal FY06 and beyond cannot be allocated. The region will have to have the Maryland and Virginia Governors and the District of Columbia Mayor sign off on the designated recipient.

The designated recipient must conduct the competitive selection process for the two programs. FTA in its recent proposed guidance suggests that transit operators not be the designated recipient for Sections 5316 and 5317 to avoid conflict of interest issues, and states that a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) could be the designated recipient.

It is proposed that the TPB would be the officially designated recipient for the JARC (5316) and New Freedom (5317) programs, and would be responsible for administering the competitive process for these two programs. Since projects funded under these two programs must be derived from the coordinated plan, the plan would guide the selection of projects. The details of the competitive process, such as selection criteria, will be considered during the development of the plan.

Projects funded with Section 5310 funds for elderly individuals and individuals with disabilities must also be derived from the coordinated plan. Since the designated recipients of Section 5310 programs will continue to be the states, the TPB will work closely with D.C., Maryland and Virginia to ensure continuity and consistency with plans, projects and priorities. The states will continue to administer the competitive process for Section 5310 funds.

The FY 2007 TPB Unified Planning Work Program would support the development of the coordinated plan. However, to serve as the designated recipient and administer the competitive process required for the JARC and New Freedom programs, the TPB will need to make use of the 10 percent of JARC and New Freedom funds available under SAFETEA-LU to cover administrative costs.

What is the timeline for the next steps?

A list of next steps and an *approximate* timeline to accomplish these steps is presented below. Please note that given the complexity of the arrangements needed for this multi-state area, the time required for accomplishing each of these steps is very difficult to estimate. Depending on a variety of factors, the actual timeline could be longer or shorter.

- The TPB is asked to review and approve the proposal (June-July 2006).

- The Maryland and Virginia Governors and the Mayor of the District of Columbia are asked to designate the TPB as the recipient for JARC and New Freedom (June to November 2006).
- The TPB establishes the TPB Human Service Transportation Coordination Task Force, identifying its chair and membership (July to September 2006).

Once the task force is established, it will work with the TPB to develop the coordinated plan and the framework for the competitive selection process as expeditiously as possible. After the plan and framework are approved by the TPB, proposals for FY2006 JARC and New Freedom funding will be solicited.

The TPB will oversee the review and selection of project proposals in accordance with the competitive selection process, and approve the selected projects for inclusion in the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

The TPB will evaluate how the plan and selection process have worked in the first year, and recommend adjustments for subsequent years as needed.