Chapter 9. Implementation Priorities New York City

Building on the analysis of unmet transportation needs for the three target populations – older adults, persons with disabilities and persons with low income – a collection of strategies was identified that offer the potential to address service gaps, unmet needs, and service duplication. These strategies drew heavily from input and suggestions gathered during the outreach meetings and interviews conducted in the summer and fall of 2008. Working in conjunction with the Stakeholder Advisory Committee, this list was winnowed and expanded and finally documented in Chapter 8 which provides a description for each strategy, cost estimates, implementation guidelines, and examples of best practices.

The NYC Stakeholder Advisory Committee met on February 26, 2009, to prioritize the proposed strategies based on criteria outlined in Figure 9-1. Meeting attendees were given nine "votes" (approximately half the number of strategies under consideration) and asked to distribute them among their preferred strategies. The only caveat placed on the process was limiting the number of votes to three a member could place on a single strategy.

Figure 9-1   Prioritization Criteria

Meet Documented Needs
● Diversify options/Create choices
● Increase accessible infrastructure
● Support existing operators
Implementation Feasibility
● Efficient use of available resources
● Likelihood of project sponsor
● Complexity of implementation
● Sustainability
Coordination
● Avoid duplication of effort
● Promote coordination

At the end of the process, the NYC Stakeholder Committee identified five strategies determined to have both a high implementation feasibility and ability to address a pressing need:

- Mobility Management;
- Taxi/Car Service Subsidy Program;
- Travel Training;
- Vehicle Acquisition; and
- Transit System Expansion.

All strategies by priority status are shown in Figure 9-2. The "MM" icon denotes strategies that could be implemented by a Mobility Manager. The remainder of the chapter provides more detailed implementation considerations for each of the strategies deemed "high priority." The purpose of this chapter is to provide enough information for the highest priority strategies so that agencies and organizations understand the respective opportunities and challenges and can hence make a more informed decision about pursuing specific grant funding.

Mobility Management

The Stakeholder Advisory Committee voiced strong support for the creation of Mobility Manager positions. This sentiment was echoed by stakeholders and underscored in recent applications to NYMTC for JARC and New Freedom funding. One of the main appeals of Mobility Managers is the flexibility of the job description – organizations may use a Mobility Manager to conduct outreach, coordinate policy, or support operations. They can be full- or part-time staff positions; may be housed in a range of agencies, organizations, or government agencies; and could be assigned in a variety of geographic configurations. The key requirement associated with establishing a Mobility Manager is that the assigned individual work on projects and programs that improve mobility and accessibility. Mobility Managers can be funded through JARC and/or New Freedom grants and are considered a capital/administrative expense, which means they are eligible for 80 percent Federal funding and require only a 20 percent local match. Another potential source of funding for Mobility Managers is the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. With a focus on job creation and job access, a Mobility Manager would fulfill the investment criteria laid out in the ARRA.

One of the primary reasons stakeholders supported the concept of mobility management stemmed from a sense that there are a lot of ongoing efforts and programs surrounding mobility and accessible transportation in New York City. Most also agreed that many of the fundamental problems associated with current efforts are clustered around issues of education, awareness and coordination. Creating a network of Mobility Managers, therefore, offers an opportunity to dedicate resources to make information available across and between programs and projects, as well as between clients and available services. As a result, Mobility Managers may help organizations connect complementary programs available in different departments and encourage agencies to adapt programs and services available to mainstream populations to members of the target populations.

Consequently, it may be appropriate to fund a variety of Mobility Managers in a variety of locations to address a variety of needs. As part of this study, the Stakeholder Advisory Committee identified three categories of needs that Mobility Managers may address:

- **Information, Outreach and Trip Planning** - This type of Mobility Manager would likely be on a community level covering several neighborhoods, but with a small enough catchment area to enable thorough knowledge of services available, and have personal relationships with local organizations providing transportation services. Primary duties could include compiling a centralized resource directory, providing trip-planning and/or ride-matching services, and overseeing a local taxi subsidy program.

- **Agency Planning** – For many agencies transportation is a secondary, not primary function and consequently the agency has limited staff resources dedicated to transportation. A Mobility Manager hired by this type of agency may fill this need. In other cases, large agencies have many individuals working on transportation issues, but none specifically assigned to the unique needs of older adults, persons with disabilities and

persons with low income. A Mobility Manager in one of these agencies could ensure the needs, perspectives, and priorities of the target populations are considered across agency planning.

Figure 9-2 Prioritized Human Service Transportation Plan Strategies for New York City Region

Strategy (to address need/gap)	Possible Lead Agency/Champion	Implementation Timeframe	Estimated Costs (Capital or Operating)	Potential Funding Sources	Strategy Overview
High Priority Strategies					
Taxi/Community Car Subsidy Programs **MM**	Medicaid Hospitals Non-profit organizations Community Transportation Providers	3-6 months	Administrative costs between $50,000 and $125,000; Subsidy costs vary by amount and number of participants	JARC New Freedom	Provide reduced-fare vouchers to older adults, persons with disabilities and persons with low income to allow for more trip flexibility and increased travel coverage as needed; may also be used to support off-peak employment opportunities. Encourages use of lower-cost travel modes and supports expansion of accessible and community car fleet.
Mobility Managers – Information Outreach, and Trip Planning **MM**	NYC – Various departments Offices of the Borough Presidents Community Boards Non-profit organizations	6 – 12 months	Annual full-time salary between $60,000 and $75,000	JARC New Freedom Municipal, state or Federal agency funding Foundation funding	A Mobility Manager could be an individual, a group of individuals or an organization that provides a wide variety of mobility management functions for consumers, human service agency staffs, and/or for community transportation providers.
Mobility Managers – Operational Support **MM**	NYC – Various Departments Offices of the Borough Presidents Community Boards Non-profit organizations	12 – 24 months	Annual full-time salary between $75,000 and $85,000	JARC New Freedom Municipal, state, or Federal agency funding Misc. transportation funds	Build on mobility management system to support existing operators with a physical resource center that offers support services for smaller operators. Potential support services may include trip scheduling; driver training, vehicle storage; maintenance, etc.
Mobility Manager Training and Support **MM**	MTA NYS DOT Offices of the Borough Presidents Community Boards Non-profit organizations	3-9 months	Annual costs between $50,000 and $100,000	New Freedom Other Federal transportation funds	Technical training for Mobility Manager is especially relevant if mobility management system is implemented in several areas and/or different agency types. Training could provide Mobility Managers with background skills and networking opportunities.

Strategy (to address need/gap)	Possible Lead Agency/Champion	Implementation Timeframe	Estimated Costs (Capital or Operating)	Potential Funding Sources	Strategy Overview
Travel Training **MM**	NYC – Various Departments Non-profit organizations Workforce One Centers	3-9 months	Varies by program – if Mobility Manager in place simple program may be $5,000	JARC New Freedom	Design programs to train individuals to use public transit. Increasing use of public transit will increase mobility for individual and reduce reliance on higher cost transportation modes. Some travel training programs exist already – potential to build on these efforts.
Vehicle Purchase	Community Transportation Providers	0-6 months	Low (per vehicle) High (to increase funding overall)	JARC New Freedom	Supplement 5310 funding to accommodate more applicants and provide more accessible vehicles. Develop strategies to reward agencies actively working to coordinate services.
Transit service expansion and improvements	MTA NYCT	12-24 months	Public transit – up to $100 per hour. Community transportation services between $55 and $65 per hour	JARC	Create new services and/or expand existing services to provide service to new areas, expand service hours and/or expand options in area with limited service. New/expanded services may include new options for late-night or weekend service. Build on opportunities to coordinate existing services to maximize efficiency and ridesharing.
Medium Priority Strategies					
Accessibility Improvements at Non-Key Rail Stations	MTA NYCT NYC DOT	> 24 months	Varies by station and type of improvement; Costs will be high as compared to other strategies	New Freedom	Projects which create more accessible facilities and/or improve the reliability of existing system would improve mobility.
Improve Access to Fixed- Route Bus Stops	NYC DOT MTA NYCT	> 24 months	Signals range from $8,000 to $12,000; Shelters $3,000 to $5,000; Curb cuts up from $1,500	New Freedom	Older adults and persons with disabilities can more easily use the bus system if there are safe passages to and from bus stops and have a place to sit at a waiting area sheltered from the weather.
Centralized Resource Directory **MM**	NYC – Various Departments Non-profit organizations	3-9 months	Development costs for basic directory $50,000 - $75,000	JARC New Freedom	Creates centralized listing of available services, including eligibility criteria, fares, etc. Directory may available in print, online and in multiple languages and formats

Strategy (to address need/gap)	Possible Lead Agency/Champion	Implementation Timeframe	Estimated Costs (Capital or Operating)	Potential Funding Sources	Strategy Overview
Bus Buddy program **MM**	NYC – Various Departments Non-profit organizations Workforce One Centers	3-9 months	Varies by program – if Mobility Manager in place simple program may be $5,000	JARC New Freedom	Refers to a highly individualized training program that assigns 'buddy' to help a new user of the public transportation network. A bus buddy program is more hands on and intensive as compared with travel training.
Low Priority Strategies					
Develop Accessible Wayfinding System	MTA NYCT NYC DOT	6-18 months	Varies by technology and location	New Freedom	Installing signage and wayfinding systems would make using system easier.
Accessible Information Systems	MTA NYCT	6-18 months	Varies by technology	New Freedom	MTA already has a notification system to announce travel delays on the subway system. This system could be expanded to announce malfunctions in the accessible infrastructure to interested travelers. A reliable announcement system could increase accessibility and encourage use of existing systems.
Job Access Strategies **MM**	NYC DOT MTA NYCT Workforce One Centers Transportation Management Associations	12-24 months	Operating costs for shuttle services are typically between $55 and $65 per hour.	JARC New Freedom	Create and operate specialized transportation services to create direct links between neighborhoods and key hard to reach employment markets
Volunteer Driver Program **MM**	Non-profit organizations Community Transportation Providers	6-12 months	Varies by program – if Mobility Manager in place simple program may be $5,000	New Freedom	Set up a network of volunteer drivers to help transport individuals with special needs or traveling longer distances. Strategy may be most effective in more suburban parts of New York City.

*NYSDOT is not eligible to receive New Freedom funds, but could design or administer program with other Federal funds, such as the Rural Transportation Assistance Program (RTAP)

Note: For each strategy a lead agency or "champion" has been suggested to initiate action. The agencies listed are merely possible lead agencies and should in no way preclude other agencies or organizations from leading an effort to address this strategy. The implementation timeframe estimates the time required to implement the strategy, after funding has been secured. Order of magnitude costs reflect approximate costs to implement the strategy, inclusive of both capital and operating costs. Low costs roughly reference strategies with annual costs of $100,000 or less; medium costs between $101,000 and $400,000 per year and high refer to strategies costing more than $401,000 per year. Potential funding sources refer to the funding programs for which projects are likely to be eligible. Examples are based on experience from across the nation of cities where similar programs have been implemented.

- **Operations Support** - Mobility Managers may also be used to provide operational support for existing community transportation providers with key operational functions. In particular, small shop transportation operators may benefit from a centralized resource center that supports them with operational resources such as (for example) vehicle maintenance, driver training; fuel purchasing, coordinating back-up drivers and vehicles, scheduling software, vehicle storage, etc. A Mobility Manager who created this type of centralized resource center would effectively consolidate key functions across agencies, helping individual operators realize service efficiencies.

Organizational Framework and Support

Given the interest and need for mobility management services, there is potential that multiple Mobility Managers will be funded and assigned to different political and geographic capacities throughout the New York City subregion. Additionally, it is likely that some Mobility Managers will be funded in the ongoing (FY 2009) JARC and New Freedom grant applications, while additional positions may emerge in the subsequent rounds. Consequently, there is potential that a network of unconnected Mobility Managers may emerge – similar but uncoordinated efforts involving individuals with different backgrounds, funded to work on varying programs and services and potentially at different stages in their work.

Ideally, therefore, as the mobility management program develops, an organizational and management framework would also emerge to collectively support and link these individuals and their efforts. The organizational structure would need to be flexible enough to support a diversity of individuals, organizations and goals, yet also be consistent enough to direct efforts, set broad goals, and identify target audiences. Ideally, the framework would also support Mobility Managers with information, resources, and contacts and provide opportunities for networking, information sharing, and training.

Setting up an organizational framework program for the Mobility Manager program, however, is more complicated, especially if the framework will span several agencies and/or organizational types. Furthermore, based on preliminary discussions with stakeholders, there is no agency or organization that is the clear choice to assume responsibility for establishing such a structure. Within individual organizations and agencies, however, there are sections and/or individuals that may lead coordination of mobility management efforts internally. These internal coordinators, in turn, may work together across agencies to create a broader framework. Organizations that seek funding for multiple Mobility Manager positions, therefore, should be encouraged to establish an internal and external framework for their programs. Ideally, an internal framework would support Mobility Managers working in different departments, geographic areas or with different target populations, but come together at regular meetings to review progress, discuss challenges, and develop support programs for Mobility Managers.

Implementation

One of the advantages of the mobility management program is that it may begin operations as soon as Mobility Manager is hired. During the planning process, several agencies and organizations expressed an interest in hiring a Mobility Manager, and as discussed, some agencies may already be in the process of getting programs started. Furthermore, because several of the strategies identified as part of the Coordinated Plan represent potential projects for a Mobility Manager, once an individual is hired they may begin implementation on some of these strategies. Salaries for Mobility Managers range from around $60,000 - $75,000 per year plus benefits, depending on the individuals experience. Mobility Managers who will be assigned to

operational issues may be more difficult to attract and therefore may warrant a slightly higher annual salary, closer to $75,000 - $85,000. Depending on the area covered and tasks assigned, Mobility Manager may be funded as part-time positions.

Taxi/Community Car Subsidy Program

For many New Yorkers, especially those without access to a private vehicle, taxis, and car services offer the most flexible and responsive form of transportation. While more expensive, the service offered by private transportation provides increases flexibility in terms of timing, destinations, and travel times. In general, members of the target populations have less access to taxis and private car services for two primary reasons: (1) only a small portion of the fleet is accessible; and (2) the high costs associated with using the service.   One strategy that helps address both of these issues is taxi and car service subsidy programs. Creating taxi and car service subsidy programs not only increases the availability of these services to individuals who typically have low incomes, it also works to stimulate demand for accessible taxis and car services. As demand for accessible vehicles increases, the private sector will be increasingly encouraged to adapt its fleet.

Taxi subsidy programs typically involve an arrangement between a sponsoring organization (or its agent) and participating taxi companies or other private-for-hire vehicle services. These programs accept and accommodate requests from sponsored customers, clients, or residents and/or accept subsidies provided by the sponsoring organization to riders as partial payment for the trip. Most such subsidy programs focus on seniors and/or persons with disabilities residing within the sponsoring agency service area, while others are income-restricted but available to general public residents. Human service agencies that employ this strategy generally limited taxi subsidies to agency clientele, program participants, or specific trip locations. In New York City, Access-A-Ride (AAR) also offers taxis and car services to customers for advance reservation and subscription trips as a part of their initiative to accommodate every registrant request and not deny any trip request. Taxis and car services are also used as a backup for regular AAR service. This means if an AAR vehicle fails to show up, individuals with a reserved trip may call a car service and be reimbursed for their travel. The NYC Department for the Aging also allows some of its transportation providers to provide car services subsidies as a part of the transportation services offered. Research suggests that these subsidizes are primarily used to support medical trips. These programs are very successful and highly valued by participants, so much so that programs have long waiting lists.

Operational Issues

The City's Taxi and Limousine Commission (TLC) would not have a direct role in administering a subsidy program, but could play an important role as a regulatory body. (As a public entity, the TLC is not eligible to purchase accessible vehicles or apply for Federal funding under the 5310 program). In particular, the TLC could require that all taxis participate in a subsidy program, but does not have the same jurisdiction over private car services. The TLC could, however, require car services install certain types of equipment, such as card reading machines for any smart card or MetroCard-based subsidy program that may eventually be implemented. TLC taxis already use credit card machines, which, combined with GPS technology, create electronic trip sheet data. This type of data can be extremely useful for tracking demand across different populations. At the very least, TLC staff members would need to be consulted or involved in the planning process for any subsidy program.

Implementation

A taxi/car service subsidy program can be implemented on a small or pilot basis, and given limitations of the existing fleet would likely be limited to ambulatory individuals only. Potential sponsors include public or non-profit entities already involved with providing or subsidizing transportation, as well as private entities offering similar services, such as hospitals. These organizations could use funding to set up a program with a specific community car service or coordinate with other agencies to create a larger subsidy program that is broadly implemented around a standardized system with consistent discount levels, administrative structure, payment options and use parameters. In either case, a taxi/car service subsidy program could be administered by Mobility Managers.

From an agency perspective, there are several ways to administer a taxi subsidy program. Sponsoring organizations may wish to control their budgets by limiting the subsidy amount per trip, the number of trips a person may take (per day, week, or month) and/or that can be taken on the system (per day), the latter in effect a first come first served basis. A sponsoring organization would divide this unit subsidy into its annual budget for this program to figure out how many trips it could afford for the year. This could then be converted to a daily, weekly, or monthly trip limit for each individual.

Methods for getting the subsidy to the individual includes reimbursing them for certain rides, setting up paper vouchers and/or setting up unique identifiers. Experience suggests there are increased opportunities for fraud if rides are arranged directly between the rider and taxi company or driver. The use of paper vouchers is also highly susceptible to fraud. Setting up a program in this way, therefore, requires additional monitoring mechanisms. Alternative administrative methods include using a system of numerical confirmation codes, similar to Access-A-Ride's car-service "voucher" program. Another possibility is to use a smart card technology that would give individuals a monthly stipend for trips. This allows maximum user flexibility and can simplify monitoring and cost-sharing arrangements for sponsoring agencies. Data from the smart card could be compiled in a monthly report by the taxi or car service and sent to the sponsoring agency. If there are multiple partners sponsoring the program, the smart card data could identify which passenger type was served and divide costs accordingly.

The main administrative costs of a taxi subsidy program are associated with labor required to register participants and oversee the contract. A program with multiple sponsors that is administered as an expansion to an existing contract with a transportation provider with certain infrastructure in place (call center, etc.) may cost between $75,000 and $125,000. A more localized program, on the other hand, might cost between $50,000 and $75,000 to administer. The subsidy cost depends on the amount of the subsidy per trip and the number of participants. To allow one individual two subsidized trips per month and subsidizing each trip up to $10 would cost about $240 annually – extending this program to 100 individuals would cost $24,000. Agencies can control their budget by setting parameters on use, by setting budgets for individual use or creating a program ceiling and allowing trips on a first-come, first served basis.

A potential funding source is Section 5317 (New Freedom) if it is a new program and goes beyond the minimum requirements of the ADA in offering same-day service and service beyond the ADA service area. Section 5317 funding is also available for a Mobility Manager, noting that the Federal share of mobility management costs may not exceed 80 percent of the net cost of the activity. Section 5316 (JARC) may also come into play if this service offers access to/from employment services or training (e.g., guaranteed ride home or as a feeder service to a train

station). FTA considers subsidy programs as an operating program and funds them at 50 percent. Funding from other municipal or agency partners would cover the cost of their constituents or clients. A potential sponsor might also look at this as a way to reduce the current cost of paratransit if it believes that it can divert trips to such a service.

Accessible Taxis

As discussed, another critical concern for persons with disabilities is the issue of accessible cabs. The city is currently conducting a pilot project using a dispatch service for its accessible taxicab fleet. Though no data has been officially released, reviews of the program to-date are mixed. Taxi drivers report low demand for the service, and riders report long wait times (up to 40 minutes). Advocacy organizations insist that demand would be greater if more people knew about the program and the availability of accessible taxis. A taxi/car service subsidy program would expand the taxi and car service's current pool of users, likely with an increase in the number of persons using wheelchairs. This increase could heighten taxi and car service companies' awareness of the demand for accessible vehicles and encourage them to add more to their fleets.

In order to auction new medallions, accessible or otherwise, the TLC would need new state authorization to expand its taxi fleet. Due to this limitation, the TLC is looking for ways to encourage accessible vehicle use among the car services it regulates instead of the medallion holders. For car services, accessible vehicles are far more expensive, costing nearly $45,000 more, than a typical car service vehicle, which can cost less than $10,000 per vehicle. One way to get around the cost implications would be for a non-profit organization or governmental entity to use Section 5310 or New Freedom funds to purchase an accessible taxi vehicle and lease this vehicle to an operator. Challenges to this approach are that a single or even handful of accessible vehicles are unlikely to significantly change fleet composition such that a non-ambulatory individual could reliably call a car service. Additionally, the sponsoring organization would be required to comply with TLC's governing regulations for community car services.

Travel Training

People who have never used public transportation often have real concerns and fears about using the public transportation network. A training program that teaches consumers how to use public transportation and become confident transit riders can help encourage use of public transit. Travel training may be promoted as a marketing strategy to encourage key consumer groups (i.e., older adults) to use public transit; or it may be targeted towards frequent users of paratransit to encourage individuals to use lower-cost fixed-route services, as appropriate to the individual's circumstances. Focus groups revealed that persons with disabilities are often very comfortable navigating the system after one-on-one training showed them the specifics of how to navigate specific stations or routes that they frequently used.

Administrative Issues

There are very few administrative issues associated with setting up travel training programs. Indeed, several organizations in New York City already operate very successful travel training programs, most notable among them the Department of Education's travel training for developmentally disabled students. The MTA also offers travel training for all of its services.

An important element associated with program success is marketing. Many individuals are not aware of travel training services available to them or members of their community. Nor do they

necessarily understand how they work. Special effort should be made to advertise short travel training sessions and more involved, one-on-one services. A Mobility Manager could undertake advertising these services as part of a larger mobility mission, be it neighborhood-based or specific to a population group.

Travel training programs could be implemented at many levels of the transportation service system. The MTA may also seek funding to expand their travel training program. Other potential sponsors include NYC departments, non-profit organizations, and other community organizations. A local Mobility Manager could coordinate these programs for specific populations or neighborhoods. In addition, because the FTA considers travel training part of mobility management, such programs can be funded as a capital expense with 80 percent funding. Depending on the populations served, New Freedom funding or JARC funding could be used to support travel training activities.

Implementation

Travel training programs can range considerably; they may be based on a single, short session covering basic skills to multiple sessions provided over an extended time period. Likewise, a program may concentrate on a single skill, such as riding the bus or offer more comprehensive training that includes the full range of available services, including learning to use online trip planning tools. An important element of training is human contact, which can eliminate the intimidation factor associated with traveling on transit. Mobility Managers are logical resources for getting a travel training program organized and operated; this is true for Mobility Managers working in specific neighborhoods or with specific populations.

 Potential types of travel training programs include:

- **Basic Training Sessions** – Many types of travel training focus on navigating complicated schedules and maps, and a short afternoon session reviewing transit literature is often enough to give many individuals the confidence to ride transit alone. Including training for online trip-planning sites, such as 511 NY and Hopstop, can be very useful for encouraging individuals to travel independently. Senior centers are an ideal setting for these types of sessions. Funding could also be used to train individuals who will in turn provide training services to senior centers or local organizations. Also, the Department of Motor Vehicles could encourage older adults who are contemplating giving up their license to participate in travel training sessions.

- **One-on-one Training Sessions** – Many individuals, especially persons who use wheelchairs or live with other types of disabilities, find that multi-session, individualized route planning and practice are necessary to travel independently on transit. These training sessions can involve a range of step-by-step guidance, including using wheelchair lifts and elevators, negotiating difficult transfers, and knowing how to take alternative routes during service interruptions. This type of service is available through the MTA, the city's Department of Education, and several non-profits.

- **"Bus" Buddies** – A bus buddy program involves pairing individuals with a bus buddy, who will travel with them on the bus or subway until the individual gains sufficient confidence to travel independently. This type of program provides even more individualized training than an intensive program and thus has more extensive administrative and management requirements. It has proven to be very useful in expanding individual mobility. Bus buddies are usually volunteers. Recruiting and maintaining an active roster of volunteer bus buddies can prove to be a challenge.

Transit Service Expansion and Improvements

Inherently, one of the underlying purposes for implementing coordination strategies is to effect efficiencies that can be used to stretch funding to enable the expansion of service. There is funding available from the FTA, through the JARC and New Freedom and 5311 programs, which could be used to partially fund expansion of service hours or geographies in order to help meet the expressed unmet need for public transit on weekends and weekdays, and in areas with employment opportunities that are currently underserved by transit.

The benefits of service expansion are quite clear. Members of the three target populations (seniors, persons with disabilities, and persons with low income) would be able to access more services, more programs, more job opportunities, and be able to take more trips for shopping, recreation, social events, and faith-based activities. Opportunities for evening and "graveyard" shifts would open up to persons with low income; while enabling them to leave their car home for their families. Such a service expansion could also support teenagers in their need to travel independently and access after-school and weekend jobs.

Similarly, though New York City's transit coverage is expansive, many neighborhoods have very limited transit options, even during weekdays. Some outlying areas of the Bronx, Brooklyn, and Queens require multiple transfers to access job markets. Staten Island has extremely limited rail coverage, and some neighborhoods are over a mile even from a bus route. Even parts of Manhattan have infrequent service, especially on late nights or weekends.

Financing Issues

Expanding service, temporally or spatially, is one of the more expensive strategies prioritized in this process. Still, with such an affordable and vast transit system, this may be one of the most cost-effective ways to increase mobility in the city. Funding streams include JARC, if the service is used to support employment, and potentially New Freedom, if the service is used to solely support persons with disabilities and goes beyond the requirements of ADA. Rule-making for the New Freedom program clearly says that expanding transit service to the public-at-large is not fundable under New Freedom. JARC funding, on the other hand, can be used to fund transit services that benefit the public-at-large if those services increase access to employment or job training. In addition, JARC funds may be matched by other Federal programs as long as the funds do not originate from the Department of Transportation (DOT). Thus, Department of Labor (Welfare to Work), Health and Human Services, Temporary Aid to Needy Families (TANF), and Medicaid funds can be used as local match.

Implementation

Generally speaking, establishing new transit services and/or expanding existing services is challenging, especially if the new services will be operated by existing transit service providers. Public transit services in New York City are expensive to operate with operating costs of up to $100 per hour. Locally, agencies are often reluctant to commit the ongoing funding required to support operating programs. Furthermore, operating costs are subsidized at a 50 percent level, as compared with capital projects which are funded at 80 percent. A final challenge facing existing providers is a queue of prioritized potential new services for each of the operating districts, which may or may not include JARC routes. That said, it is possible that new service brought to the table with grant funds and local funding partners may be implemented, as demonstrated by the College of Staten Island service mentioned in Chapter 8.

Expanding non-MTA services, such as routes or service hours operated by senior or medical service centers would likely be more feasible, assuming the senior center has capital and administrative capacity to operate the new routes. Such services are typically significantly less expensive to operate (range between $55 to $65 per hour) and should be highly targeted to meet specific needs.

Vehicle Acquisition

Capital funding supports community transportation services by helping agencies purchase vehicles. The primary Federal funding program to support non-profit and some public entities is Section 5310, which helps agencies purchase vehicles by paying 80 percent of the cost of vehicle. In New York, this program is administered statewide by NYSDOT and currently, the number of agencies that apply for this funding in New York City exceeds the available funds.

Stakeholders felt strongly that the capital funds are needed to maintain existing service levels as well as support development of new programs and services. Given constraints on Section 5310 resources, stakeholders expressed a desire to increase the amount of funding available for capital purchases overall. There was also a sense that vehicle purchase programs should substantively support ongoing coordination efforts. Given these requirements, stakeholders prioritized efforts that would expand capital funding, such as the creative use of other Federal programs, including both JARC and New Freedom, to purchase vehicles.

Administrative Issues

Administered in New York State by NYSDOT, Section 5310 is a longstanding FTA program that has been helping non-profit and public agencies purchase vehicles. As mentioned, the program is administered statewide, so demand for funding is high and competition strong. Stakeholders expressed a desire to strengthen the coordination requirements of the application process, noting that while the requirements have long been a part of the application process, they are rarely implemented. Stronger coordination requirements would reward coordinated programs and, in cases where existing agencies are working together, help them replace aging vehicles. Influencing the application process is a policy decision that is clearly stated in SAFETEA-LU regulations, which require agencies to coordinate service as a prerequisite to receiving funding. New York City agencies and potentially Mobility Managers may continue to work with NYSDOT to strengthen this part of the process.

Agencies that will use vehicles to support job access or provide new services for persons with disabilities may use JARC and New Freedom to purchase vehicles.   Furthermore, with the JARC and New Freedom programs, there is more local control over how the applications are prioritized, the type of vehicle purchased and which agencies ultimately receive vehicles. Ideally, NYSDOT would be involved in this process so that all parties understand that the region is using JARC and New Freedom funds only after opportunities to use 5310 funds have been exhausted.

Implementation

Using JARC and New Freedom programs to purchase vehicles is fairly straight-forward. Applicants may apply for funds as they would for other projects. Vehicles purchased with JARC funds must demonstrate that they will be used to link to employment opportunities, and New Freedom funds must demonstrate that the vehicles will enable service providers to go above and beyond ADA requirements.

Vehicles purchased by either program must be accessible. Smaller accessible vehicles that carry between 8 and 14 (ambulatory) passenger vans cost between $30,000 and $50,000, while larger 35 foot buses are significantly more on expensive, with costs ranging from $100,000 to $500,000.